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**At the Edge of Mangrove Forest:
The Suku Asli and the Quest for
Indigeneity, Ethnicity and Development**

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Declaration Page

This is to certify that this thesis has been composed by me and is completely my work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

30th January 2016

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Abstract

This thesis explores the emergence of indigeneity among a group of post-foragers living on the eastern coast of Sumatra. In the past, despite the lack of definite ethnic boundaries and the fluidity of their identity, they were known as Utan ('Forest') or Orang Utan ('Forest People'). Since 2006, however, many Utan have adopted the new ethnonym of Suku Asli ('Indigenous People') and begun claiming their position within the Indonesian State as an integrated and distinctive ethnic group – a group, that is, associated with a unique 'tradition' (*adat*) and a particular 'indigenous' identity. As Suku Asli, they have been trying to integrate this identity and protect the 'ancestral' lands with which it is thought to be intimately associated. The emergence of this identity does not reflect only their own aspirations but, also, their entanglement with a number of government development programmes or interventions aiming to transform the lives of local 'tribespeople'. Throughout these contexts, the most important change has been the development of their indigeneity – an indigeneity which, in the context of Indonesia, is 'imagined' and recognised in a very particular way by the State. It is on the basis of this indigeneity that the Suku Asli have begun to re-configure their traditional identity and their place within the Nation State. Focusing on some of its most important manifestations and embodiments, the thesis attempts to chart the emergence of this indigeneity and relate it to the entanglement of the people and the government. Treating indigeneity as a perspective that is created between the locals' traditionally fluid identity and the government development programmes, I describe some of the ways in which 'tribespeople' come to embody, resist and transform the government image of 'indigenous people' and accomplish their 'modernisation' – a 'modernisation' demanding, first and foremost, a distinctive and well-bounded indigenous identity.

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Abbreviations

AMAN	Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara (Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago)
IKBBSA	Ikatan Keluarga Besar Batin Suku Asli (Suku Asli Headman's League)
KAT	Komunitas Adat Terpencil (geographically and politically isolated <i>adat</i> community)
OPSA	Organisasi Pemuda Suku Asli (Suku Asli Youth Organisation)
SKSA	Surat Keterangan Suku Asli (certificate of being the Suku Asli)
VOC	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company)

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Introduction

When I first met Pak Koding¹, one of my best informants, he insisted that now everything is different and more and more people ‘become (*jadi*)’ Suku Asli. Now, as he puts it, he and his people identify themselves as Suku Asli, translated as ‘indigenous people’. I am going to explore who the Suku Asli are and to explain the recent emergence of their ethnic identity first and foremost in terms of indigeneity.

Indigeneity as an international concept

Indigeneity in relation to others

Since the 1980s, the concept of ‘indigenous peoples’ has become increasingly important at the international political level in a number of challenges attempting to improve the marginalised situation of native or autochthonous peoples. Indeed, the United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) defined ‘indigenous peoples’ and emphasised the need to protect their rights in 1986 and 1989, respectively. At this level, the definition of ‘indigenous peoples’ is composed of four points: the priority of land occupation in time, cultural distinctiveness, identification by themselves and others, and the experience of marginalisation (Saugestad 2004: 264). The UN, then, declared the International Year of Indigenous Peoples in 1993 and the UN International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples between 1995 and 2005. In 2007, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was ratified in the UN General Assembly (Merlan 2009; Wawrinec 2010). In accordance with the international conceptualisation of ‘indigenous peoples’, more and more local, national and international agents, such as local authorities, non-government organisations (NGOs) and international activists, have been involved in the movement to ensure and protect the land rights of local communities.

As a consequence of the rise of the ‘indigenous movement’, anthropologists began to criticise the implementation of the universal definition of ‘indigenous

¹ Individual names that appear in this thesis are all pseudonyms.

peoples'. For example, John Bowen (2000) points out the risks in applying the concept, which was conceptualised according to understandings of indigeneity in the settler societies of the Americas and Australia, to non-settler societies of Asia and Africa, as peoples in the latter regions have moved frequently and the distinction in terms of 'indigenous people' is quite difficult to make. For instance, in terms of the San people in southern Africa, Renée Sylvain (2002) argues that while the international model of 'indigenous peoples' is emerging in their society under the support of an NGO, it prevents the recognition of the San cultural identity and replaces the efforts of the San activists to fight the legacy of apartheid, racial segregation and class exploitation, because the model ignores their bifurcated history and promotes a preservationism and essentialism in the way it treats their culture and ethnicity. In particular, Adam Kuper's criticism (2003) has brought about intensive debates. He points out that the concept of 'indigenous peoples' is based on the obsolete concept of 'primitive peoples', and questions the empirical validity of the claim to 'be indigenous' in a primordial sense that involves a traditional way of life and a static connection with the land. He warns that the international conceptualisation of 'indigenous peoples' involves the risk of essentialism in which the people who fail to prove their indigenous position are marginalised and discriminated against even further.

Indigeneity is literally understood as involving 'first-order connections (usually at small scale) between group and locality' (Merlan 2009: 304). Emphasising the autochthonic sense, some definitions try to specify the people through descriptions of 'what people must be and how people must differ from others' (Merlan 2009: 305). For example, the ILO definition of 'indigenous' in 1989 is: '(a) "tribal" people whose social, cultural, and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community; (b) people descended from populations that inhabited the country; (c) people retaining some or all of their own institutions' (Merlan 2009: 305; see also Dove 2006: 192). Francesca Merlan (2009: 305) sees this kind of definitions as 'criterial'; it proposes 'some set of criteria, or conditions, that enable identification of the "indigenous" as a global "kind"'. In this scheme, 'indigenous peoples' are defined in association with autochthony, they are pre-modern or 'primitive' and differ from those who are 'modern' and 'civilised' (de la Cadena and

Starn 2007: 7-8). These critiques present the problems that are generated by such specifications of people and the attempts to provide a clear designation of conceptual and practical boundaries between those who are 'indigenous' and those who are not.

However, in recent studies, more and more anthropologists see indigeneity as 'relational' rather than 'criterial' (Merlan 2009; Trigger and Dalley 2010). Merlan (2009: 305) defines 'relational' as emphasising 'grounding in relations between the "indigenous" and their "others" rather than in properties inherent only to those we call "indigenous" themselves'. From this perspective, indigeneity can be seen not as a fixed state of being but as a process emerging in relationships and dialogues with the 'non-indigenous' in various forms in different parts of the world (Trigger and Dalley 2010: 49), based on 'self-identification, participation and acceptance' (Merlan 2009: 306). In this perspective, the authentic indigeneity of 'autochthony and the pre-modern' is done away with (de la Cadena and Starn 2007: 8), and indigeneity is understood as something constructed in the transactions between 'indigenous' people and others in each local context.

In this approach, "'indigeneity" as a political concept is like ethnicity' (A. Barnard 2006: 16). As Fredrik Barth (1969: 9-15) points out, ethnicity is something determined in the transactions between self-ascription and ascription by others, and it is not necessarily related to cultural contents. In the same way, while indigeneity has a somewhat clearer criterion specifying a connection between land and people rather than it is the case with ethnicity, it is not necessarily constrained by their autochthony, and their identification and identification by others is more essential. In other words, indigeneity is 'fundamentally not a thing *in* the world, but a perspective *on* the world' (Brubaker 2004: 65), the same as ethnicity. Indigeneity is a way of viewing the world, which is generated in relation to others. This perspective is necessary to understand the claim of indigeneity especially in Asia and Africa where, historically, people have frequently moved around different places.

Indigeneity as an image by others

Geoffrey Benjamin (2002, 2012, forthcoming [2017]), an anthropologist who has studied the Orang Asli groups in Malaysia, theorises the various social dimensions that emerge around the concept of indigeneity, and also suggests that indigeneity is something formulated in relation to others. He grasps the transactions between the indigenous and the non-indigenous by employing the terms of ‘indigeny’ and ‘exogeny’. On the one hand, he defines ‘exogeny’ as a term that is associated with exogenes ‘who moved away from the places inhabited by their presumed familial ancestors’, something which ‘characterises a high proportion of the world’s population, both rural and urban’ (Benjamin forthcoming). These people ‘think of territories as commodities (“objects”) open to exploitation’, and modernity is formed on the basis of such an exogenous idea. On the other hand, ‘indigeny’ is the antonym of ‘exogeny’, and it is associated with the indigenes ‘whose ancestors (so far as they know) have occupied their places of habitation from time immemorial’ (forthcoming). According to him, ‘indigeny has to do with *family*-level connections to concrete *place*, and not with the connection of whole ethnic groups (whatever they may be) to broad territories’ (2002: 15). In other words, ‘indigeny’ is a label which can be used to indicate a concrete linkage between people and place that has been formed through the historical sedimentation of the peoples’ everyday experiences and inheritances without the influence of long historical political processes. He also points out that this ‘indigeny’ is tacit, non-articulated and unconscious because their place is their subjective world itself, one that has been inherited from their ancestors through their language and practices. In this situation, it is also impossible to see their land as a commodity. Thus, for people themselves, ‘indigeny’ can be seen as an emotional, unconscious and primordial attachment to a land within a small community. At its unconscious and subjective point, ‘indigeny’ is completely different from ‘indigenism’ and ‘indigenusness’, which are self-conscious political stances that organise the related people collectively and allow them to claim a certain degree of autonomy from the state, or may occasionally be used by the state for its own purpose (2012: 8, forthcoming).

On the other hand, while recognising that the term ‘indigeneity’ has been used for ‘indigeny’, ‘indigenism’ and ‘indigenusness’ rather vaguely, he distinguishes ‘indigeneity’ from those similar terms and sees its utility as referring to something generated in relation to others. He suggests that the term can be used for labelling ‘the images of the “indigenous” produced by non-indigenous (exogenous) individuals concerned to construct a model of alterity, especially in discussing environmental or traditional-knowledge issues’ (Benjamin 2012: 8). In other words, indigeneity is a form of category and identity which emerge from the perspective of the exogenes in the modern political context (Benjamin forthcoming). Thus, the ‘indigenous peoples’, in which ‘indigenous’ is the adjective of this ‘indigeneity’, can be seen as those who adopt and embody the image of non-indigenous people – that is, ‘indigenising’ themselves – in and through their communication with non-indigenous, modern people.

Indigeneity stands in association with others’ modern perspective and its politics rather than the peoples’ traditional way of life or connection with an ancestral land. Some anthropologists describe such qualities of indigeneity. In the context of Amazonian Indians, Beth Conklin (1997) argues that the Amazonian manifestation of indigeneity is created in and through active adoptions and demonstrations of the Western image of indigenous people. While it is a strategically effective tool in order to claim the protection of their environment, she concludes that it encompasses a downside that they reduce their own cultural authenticity to a Western conception of authenticity. Along similar lines, through describing the process by which ‘indigenous people’ in the Philippines were recognised, Frank Hirtz (2003) suggests that indigeneity is recognised only in and through the modern administrative procedures and representational processes. According to him, ‘it takes modern ways to be traditional, to be indigenous’; and, by doing so, the ‘groups enter the realm of modernity’ (2003: 889). Indeed, the manifestation of indigeneity involves various procedures such as the examination of historical facts, the documentation of identity, legitimisation of traditional institutions and the establishment of museums, foundations and ethnic organisations (see Masuda 2009). Thus, Michael Dove et al. (2007: 131) suggest that ‘the rise of interest in indigeneity’ is ‘both a product of, and a marker of, modernity’. Indigeneity is a process that emerges in the communication with

modernity among people who have ‘indigeny’ (see also Porath 2002a), and this communication results in their entering ‘modernity’.

If so, how are people who have ‘indigeny’ brought to the arena of modernity and how is indigeneity embodied in local communities? The main agents are activists, local authorities and the government, which have adopted the concept of ‘indigenous peoples’ from national and international contexts, and they intervene in the life of local communities under the banner of development programmes that involves the power of, to echo Foucault, “governmentality” (Foucault 1991; Li 2000, 2007b). Distinct from ‘sovereignty’ and ‘discipline’, which directly restrict and reform the behaviour and knowledge of a population, ‘governmentality’ is an attempt to shape human conduct by ‘educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations, and beliefs’, and is especially concerned with the ‘well-being’ of the population (Li 2007b: 5). ‘To govern means to act on the actions of subjects who retain the capacity to act otherwise’ (Li 2007b: 17). Demonstrating these quests for the well-being of the people themselves, the activists, local authorities and governments try to introduce to the local communities their idea of how they should live and encourage them to accept the category and identity of ‘indigenous people’. As a result, the local communities conceptualise their position as ‘indigenous peoples’ in the state and embody the position in their way of life.

This process is not enacted through imposition but in collaboration between the agents’ suggestions and the historical identity and practices of the people. Michael Hathaway (2010) describes the process whereby the Chinese living in Yunnan became ‘indigenous’ after the 1990s through environmental conservation and rural development programmes, and suggests:

Their work in fostering an indigenous space is neither a top-down imposition of a foreign social category nor a spontaneous bottom-up social movement of social activism. Rather, it works mainly in an intermediate realm, and is being pushed outward by Chinese public intellectuals, tentatively and unevenly. (2010: 320)

Tania Murray Li (2000) goes one step further and suggests indigenous identity is something ‘articulated’ in the history of confrontation, engagement and struggle. According to her:

a group's self-identification as tribal or indigenous is not natural or inevitable, but neither is it simply invented, adopted, or imposed. It is, rather, a *positioning* which draws upon historically sedimented practices, landscapes, and repertoires of meaning, and emerges through particular patterns of engagement and struggle. The conjunctures at which (some) people come to identify themselves as indigenous, realigning the ways they connect to the nation, the government, and their own, unique tribal place, are the contingent products of agency and the cultural and political work of *articulation*. (2000: 151)

The 'historically sedimented practices, landscape, and repertoires of meaning' can be seen as unconscious and subjective 'indigeny' of a local community. Self-identification as indigenous is drawn upon such 'indigeny' and emerges in and through the 'engagement and struggle'.

In short, indigeneity is a perspective that emerges in the transactions between people who are regarded as indigenous and exogenous or modern others. On the one hand, outsiders try to introduce the image of 'indigenous peoples' to the people whom they regard as indigenous through the echo of 'governmentality'. On the other hand, the people themselves embody the image held by the outsiders and indigenise themselves. However, this is not a simple adoption of the outsiders' image. They have their own unconscious and subjective identity and practice that is sedimented in their history – that is, 'indigeny' – and, upon this basis, indigeneity is both manifested and embodied.

What I would like to explore in this thesis is the emerging process of indigeneity among the Suku Asli living on the eastern coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. The Suku Asli recognise themselves and are recognised as *orang asli*, which can be translated as 'tribespeople' or 'indigenous people' in the region. They are obviously tribespeople. With the term 'tribespeople', which I adopted from Benjamin's work, I mean the segmentary and uncentralised peoples, who are not completely subsumed under centralised state control based on their own choice in the state political structure of ruler-peasant-tribespeople relationship (Benjamin 2002: 7-9; Scott 2009; see also Chapter 1). They have a history of rejecting their assimilation to peasants, who are, in this region, Malay, Javanese and Minangkabau. In addition, although their ancestors were certainly first occupiers at some places in this region, they are not people who can be clearly defined as indigenous. Living in a region that is characterised by frequent population moves and low density in the past, they are

more or less exogenous, and their position as ‘indigenous people’ can be seen only in relation to others living around them. In recent years, the Suku Asli have begun to manifest indigeneity in and through their engagement with development programmes imposed by the government. In this process, they have adopted the government image of ‘indigenous peoples’ and tried to demonstrate their position in the state administrative system. Why did they begin demonstrating their position as indigenous peoples? How do they interpret and manifest their indigeneity? How have they adopted the government image in relation to their ancestral but segmentary identities and practices? Combining the relational definitions of indigeneity and Benjamin’s definition of indigeneity based on an outsider’s image, I argue that indigeneity is a perspective drawn upon ‘indigeny’ in and through the government development programme, and I would like to explore the transactions between tribespeople and the government in the context of the Suku Asli.

Indigeneity in Indonesian politics

‘Indigenous people’ and ‘adat community’

Let me explain the historical process of the conceptualisation of indigeneity in Indonesian politics. The Indonesian version of indigeneity as a political concept has its roots in the Dutch direct rule that began at the beginning of the nineteenth century. For the purpose of controlling the population effectively, the colonial government divided it into two legal categories, i.e. ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives (*inlanders*; *bumiputera*)’. While the Europeans followed the Dutch national laws, the ‘Natives’ were supposed to follow their customary law – that is, *adat* (Fasseur 2007: 50-51; Moniaga 2007: 277; Li 2007b: 44; see also Chapter 5). When the Republic of Indonesia declared independence in 1945, these categories were abolished because the government attempted to end the racial discrimination derived from them. Thus, in the Constitution of Indonesia of 1945, the government used the term *orang Indonesia asli* (real/indigenous Indonesians) (Moniada 2007: 277). Then, under the Sukarno regime (1945-1967), the concept of *pribumi* (sons of the soil; native

Indonesians) gained legal standing in 1959. The main purpose of establishing this category was to distinguish and protect the rights of autochthonous populations from those who had their origin outside Indonesia, especially the ethnic Chinese who gained power in the Indonesian economy (Moniaga 2007: 277-278; Tsing 2007: 54-55). The *pribumi* category was maintained until 2006 when a new citizenship law was passed (Wawrnec 2010: 102). While the concepts of 'Natives', *orang Indonesia asli* and *pribumi*, are related to being indigenous, they are obviously different from the current concept of 'indigenous peoples' because they are concerned with large-scale and national-level connections between population and territory. The government maintained this linkage between the population as a whole and state territory in post-independence Indonesia, because being indigenous in this way was meant to 'look back to the anticolonial project and the alliance between elites and peasants that created the nation-state' (Tsing 2007: 54). In other words, the concept was used for integrating the state bridging a number of different people together.

From this perspective of large-scale, national-level linkage, the government did not regard as important the small-scale connections that could be related to the international concept of 'indigenous peoples'. During the Sukarno and Suharto (1967-1998) regimes, the government pursued centralised sovereignty, in which they implemented various laws which claimed state priority over local lands and resources, and imposed resettlement programmes on rural populations (Duncan 2004a; Persoon 1998; Wee 2002; see also Chapter 1). The government justified their policies by emphasising the 'development' of the state as a whole. The government's negative attitude to the small-scale connections is also seen in their resistance to the international definition of 'indigenous peoples'. The government resisted the implementation of the ILO Convention 169 in 1989 and the United Nations Year of Indigenous Peoples in 1993 (Bedner and Huis 2008: 165-169; Persoon 1998: 294-295). Also, even in recent years, although the government ratified the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples of 2007, they emphasised that all ethnic groups in Indonesia are indigenous or native (Bender and Huis 2008: 169; Merlan 2009; Tsing 2007: 54).

However, through the political actions by national and international activists as well as local authorities who adopted the international concept, the government's

attitude eventually changed. The massive exploitation of local lands and resources during Suharto's New Order regime raised dissatisfaction among the locals. However, social protest was censored in this era, and the ways the locals could resist the government exploitation were extremely limited to only ones that the government may have accepted as legitimate. Some local communities tried to negotiate with the government moderately insisting on their ancestral use of lands and resources using the term *adat* (Benda-Beckmann and Benda-Beckmann 2011: 183); and some activists and locals emphasised the land rights of rural communities in their attempt to protect natural environments (Tsing 2007: 37). In 1998, President Suharto fell from power and the government changed its policies under the slogan of 'Reformation (*Reformasi*)'. This change was characterised by 'decentralisation', in which the new polity distributed political power and economic profits to the provinces, regencies, sub-districts and villages while previously power and authority were concentrated on the state capital, Jakarta. In this political atmosphere, an NGO, AMAN (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara*; Archipelagic Alliance of *Adat* Community) was founded in 1999 (Henley and Davidson 2007: 1-2). This organisation is involved in international indigenous rights advocacy organisations, and has frequently received foreign funding and utilised international media effectively (Henley and Davidson 2007: 7-8). Under their umbrella, local people, who had experienced exploitation of their lands and resources by the government and government-sponsored corporations, began claiming their rights to ancestral land and its resources.

However, the term 'indigenous peoples' in international discourse was not simply imported to the Indonesian 'indigenous movement'. Instead, the term was translated into '*adat* community (*masyarakat adat*)' by AMAN, and the locals have mobilised their indigenism under the banner of this Indonesian concept (Li 2000: 155, 2001: 645-646). *Adat* is usually translated as 'tradition', 'custom' and 'customary law', therefore, '*adat* community' can be interpreted as 'traditional or customary community'. During the late colonial era, the '*adat* law community' (*adatrechtsgemeenschap* in Dutch; *masyarakat hukum adat* in Indonesian) was recognised by the colonial government and allowed to regulate matters such as access to farmlands and forests, and was associated with the ideal image of a

historically continuous and harmonious rural community (Henley and Davidson 2007: 20; Li 2000: 159, 2007b: 50; see Chapter 5). However, during the New Order regime, customary laws or *adat* that had controlled the local use of lands were depoliticised and reduced to harmless cultural forms like dance, song, architecture and ritual (Acciaioli 1985; Tsing 2007: 35; see also Chapter 5). Therefore, the main purpose of AMAN was to regain the legitimacy of *adat* and ‘*adat* community’. Some powerful ethnic groups such as the Balinese and Minangkabau have begun to revive or newly acquire political authority and land rights by reinforcing the organisation of their local ethnic councils in this movement through an emphasis on *adat* (Biezeveld 2007; Warren 2007).

Given the continuous lobbying by the locals and the various NGOs, and the political atmosphere of ‘decentralisation’, the government also began to recognise or, at least, give more respect to ‘traditional’ access to and maintenance of lands and resources, i.e. *adat*, among the local communities. The government revised a series of the national laws concerned with land ownership such as the Basic Forestry Law and the Natural Resources Law between 1999 and 2004 (Bedner and Huis 2007: 184-190; Fitzpatrick 2007: 139-142), and the land rights of local communities based on *adat* were ensured in the realms where it did not collide with the national laws and government policies. Furthermore, in the last few years, the government has sought to officially recognise ‘customary law communities (*masyarakat hukum adat*)’ and grant them special status, rights and entitlements. In 2013, according to Arizona Yance and Erasmus Cahyadi (2013: 56), the Indonesian parliament discussed a national law, in which five points were decided to be the criteria for specifying a ‘customary law community’: to have a shared history as *adat* community; to own *adat* territory or customary land; to have *adat* law; to possess *adat* property, relations, and artefacts; and to have a customary governance system. These points, which are formulated in a very criterial fashion without mention of their relational quality, repeatedly foreground *adat* and emphasise social integration based on it. For the government, an ‘*adat* community’ is something substantial, which has a strong solidarity based on *adat*, and it has decided to give special rights to such communities.

In the historical process of this conceptualisation, we can see some characteristic features of the Indonesian ‘indigenous movement’. First, the Indonesian ‘indigenous movement’ is characterised by a great quest for *adat* that has been inherited from ancestors in local communities and was once recognised by the Dutch colonial government. Thus, David Henley and Jamie Davidson (2007) call the Indonesian indigenous movement ‘*adat* revivalism’. This movement centres on the locals trying to gain their land rights in and through actions to revive or, more precisely, construct their ‘traditional’ legal orders that were ignored by the post-independence government. Therefore, not only marginalised ‘tribal’ groups, but also rather ‘civilised’ peoples such as the Minangkabau and the Balinese participate in this ‘*adat* revivalism’. Second, this ‘*adat* revivalism’ is deeply related not only to the legal sphere in terms of land rights but also the spheres of tradition and culture. This is because the term *adat* generally has the implication of not only law-like rules but also morals, norms, rituals and other cultural practices in everyday life. Furthermore, the state emphasised its cultural aspect rather than the legal ones during the New Order regime. Therefore, a common and distinctive tradition or culture is often much more important to be ensured as ‘*adat* community’ than the one’s priority of land occupation in the past that is the first criterion within the international concept, and indeed, local communities actively try to demonstrate their shared and distinctive tradition or culture. In other words, the Indonesian ‘indigenous movement’ includes a process of traditionalisation or culturalisation. Third, Indonesian state itself has also been involved in its quest for ‘*adat* communities’. It is certain that the activists and local authorities led the introduction of the concept and that there have been tensions and conflicts between the state and the locals in terms of land rights in some regions even after the government amended the centralised laws. However, within the politics of ‘decentralisation’, the present-day government begins to define the criteria of the ‘customary law community’ and is creating and dispersing the image of it through conferring land rights to such communities. Therefore, the government is a powerful agent in the creation and integration of the ‘*adat* community’ idea, and the movement struggles cannot be reduced to a simple scheme of the state versus the locals that is found elsewhere in the world. This is especially the case for some local communities which are not supported by national and international activists. In such

situations, the locals have tried to create the social integration imagined by the state based on *adat* by (re)organising their past relationships to related peoples, circumscribing their territories, reinforcing their local rules, facilitating rituals and arts, and empowering traditional political organisations.

The emergence of 'governmentality' in policies on tribespeople

The conceptualisation of indigeneity in Indonesian policies is also related to definitions of and policies to autochthonous tribespeople. Shortly after Indonesia achieved its independence, the Department of Social Affairs in Jakarta designated a category of tribespeople and referred to them as '*suku-suku terasing* (isolated tribes)'. This category was changed into '*masyarakat terasing* (isolated communities)' in the mid-1970s (Persoon 1998: 287-288). *Suku-suku terasing* or *masyarakat terasing* were seen as the main target of government development programmes.

Generally, a development programme includes a variety of policies and aims. First, it may aim to aid industrial development, involving the exploitation of resources and land, the construction of infrastructure, and the promotion of tourism. Second, it may involve 'development' of the people themselves. These particular programmes have covered a great variety of aims: the implementation of immigration and resettlement, the management of land and resources, the legitimisation of culture and autonomy, the establishment of educational and medical institutions, the improvement of agricultural techniques, and the introduction of industry, and so forth. Tribespeople are especially the target of these kinds of programmes, which have become one of the most important political issues not only for the Indonesian government, but also for other Southeast Asian governments (Duncan 2004a: 3).

The development programmes for tribespeople can be seen as involving one of two agendas: 'raising their level of "civilisation"' and 'raising their standard of living' (Duncan 2004a: 3). The aim of the Indonesian development programmes has mainly focused on the former agenda, in which the government has tried to socially and culturally integrate them into the mainstream rural Indonesians (Persoon 1998:289;

Porath 2010: 275). To achieve this aim, the government implemented mainly three policies during the Sukarno and Suharto regimes. The first one was resettlement programmes, in which the government constructed uniformly designed permanent houses and villages, and resettled tribespeople who lived in the forests, mountains and river or sea coasts. The second policy was the introduction of permanent agriculture to those who were often shifting cultivators in the forests. The third one was to encourage them to convert to one of the government recognised religions (*agama*) (Persoon 1998: 290-294). Through these policies, the government tried to directly constrain and reform the tribespeople's behaviour, knowledge and identity, and assimilate them into 'civilised' Indonesians, although the influence of these policies was limited. For the government, tribespeople's ways of life were 'backward', 'primitive' and something that should be improved through development programmes. They did not consider the people's historical connection with and emotional attachment to a place. Here, the government did not see tribespeople's ways of life as a part of Indonesian 'cultures' that the government admitted was an important component of the multi-ethnic Nation State.

However, since the last years of the Suharto regime, the government and public perceptions of tribespeople have been gradually changing. In the rise of the environmental movement between the late 1980s and early 1990s, tribespeople were regarded as ones who have managed to live together with the vulnerable natural environments harmoniously. From that point on they were seen as having 'indigenous knowledge', acknowledged through which they maintained harmonious and sustainable relationships with their environment (Dove 2006: 195-196; Effendy 1997, 2002). In 1999, the government category of *masyarakat terasing* was replaced by '*Komunitas Adat Terpencil* (KAT; geographically and politically isolated *adat* community)' as a result of AMAN's activities (Duncan 2004b: 91), and as such their ways of life were connected with *adat* or '*adat* community' gaining the implication of belonging to idealised and harmonious rural communities – that is, an essential component of the Indonesian Nation State. This change of image is also reflected in the government way of intervention in tribespeople's life. For example, in the government project to designate a national park in Jambi province, the Orang Rimba (the Kubu), who had been seen as one of the most 'primitive' people in Indonesia,

were permitted to live in the park with the support of the NGOs that emphasised their traditional culture as being dependent on living in the forest (Li 2001). Thus, the 'primitive' and 'backward' image of tribespeople has shifted towards something related to *adat* that is an essential component of Indonesian culture.

However, this change of image and policies does not mean that the government stopped its intervention in their lives or permitted complete autonomy and self-determination among them. Instead of the direct constraint and reform of their behaviour and knowledge, the government (and also activists of the NGOs) began to intervene in tribespeople's life in a different way, a way through which they attempt to educate their desires and configure their habits and aspirations suggesting a better way of life (Duncan 2004b; Li 2007b). As I will show in the case of the Suku Asli, this attempt involves various procedures, in which the government recognised the ownership of ancestral space owned by the community, legitimised the establishment of an ethnic organisation, documented their ethnic background, promoted the traditional performances and integrated their registered religion. These policies were not imposed on the communities; instead, the government only encouraged the locals' actions through setting conditions, advising, and supplying subsidies to encourage them to behave as they should (Li 2007b: 16). The aim of these approaches is to give them the opportunity to be an '*adat* community' recognised by the government. Through these policies, the tribespeople are involved in the re-configuration of their position in the state system, and, as Nathan Porath puts it, they become 'a state-defined "primitive" ethnic minority' (2010: 269).

This change of government development programmes can be seen as the emergence of 'governmentality'. The old development programmes for tribespeople tried to restrict and reform their behaviour and knowledge through resettlement, agricultural and religious programmes. However, as a result of local resistance and the introduction of the international concept, the government tries to control their desire and aspirations through education and support. Here, indigeneity is delivered through 'governmentality', which regards the manifestation of *adat* as proof of authenticity, to tribespeople who do not always think of themselves as an '*adat* community'.

The field site: Geography and population

Riau province and the Bengkalis regency

The province of Riau covers a vast area, exhibiting a complex geography and diverse populations. The province is situated in the eastern part of Sumatra. It includes about ninety thousand square kilometres and has a population of more than six million. The province capital is Pekanbaru.

The western inland boundaries of the province border the Western Sumatra province and hilly areas that connect with the mountainous area of Minangkabau highlands. Eastward, the altitude gradually lowers and a relatively moderate valley area extends for some hundred kilometres. In this area, the four large rivers of Rokan, Siak, Kampar and Indragiri run into the Malacca Strait, and the downstream area of each river is low and marshy. Around the estuary areas, there are many islands just off from the mainland, and numerous brackish rivers and channels make up swampy lands, which are covered with mangrove forest. The south-eastern coast faces the cross point of the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea, and, offshore, there is the Riau-Lingga archipelago that was a part of Riau province until 2008. Historically, people's settlements have been formed along the rivers and their tributaries depending on the water for transportation (T. Barnard 2003: 12; Kathirithamby-Wells 1993).

Facing the Malacca Strait that connects the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea as well as the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay Peninsula, this region has been historically open to outside influences politically, economically and culturally. In ancient times, this area was controlled by the maritime trading kingdom of Srivijaya. As a trading hub, this kingdom prospered for several hundred years. Srivijaya gradually declined between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries and, then, several Malay kingdoms such as the Indragiri, Rokan, Pekantua and Gassib were established on the eastern coast of Sumatra. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, a successor of Srivijaya, the Melaka kingdom obtained control of this area, and it also became prosperous during the fifteenth century. Then the Portuguese conquered the kingdom in 1511. Then, Melaka's successor, the Johor kingdom, controlled the

basins of Indragiri, Siak and Kampar Rivers from the seventeenth century (Andaya 2008: 50-78). In 1725, Raja Kecik, who had been a Minangkabau adventurer, founded the Siak kingdom, and this kingdom reached the height of its power at the beginning of the nineteenth century (T. Barnard 2003). In 1858 when the Dutch government concluded a series of new treaties with the sultanates of Siak and Indragiri, these kingdoms lost their sovereignty, but initially had considerable autonomy (Colombijn 2003a: 508-509, 2003b: 338-341). Under Dutch control, the administrative boundaries were reshuffled. Siak, Indragiri and the Riau-Lingga Archipelago were combined as an administrative unit. In 1873, Siak was split off from the single administrative unit, and established as a new administrative unit, the Bengkalis district. Under Japanese rule between 1942 and 1945, while the Riau-Lingga Archipelago became a part of Singapore, Siak (including Bengkalis), Indragiri and Bangkinang, which had been a part of West Sumatra, were designated as *Riau syu* (province). After Indonesia achieved independence, Bangkinang, Bengkalis, Indragiri and the Riau-Lingga Archipelago formed the new province of Riau (Colombijn 2003b: 341). Finally, in 2008, the Riau-Lingga Archipelago was split off from the mainland Riau as a new province, the Riau Islands province.

Its complex geography, its position as an international trading centre, and repeated changes of the administrative borders have brought about the ethnic diversity of the population in Riau province. At present, the Malays (*Orang Melayu*) are the people who identify themselves and are identified as indigenous in general. However, their society and culture have not been integrated clearly, and, indeed, their identity has been formed by incorporating various populations through a long history of state control (Andaya 2008; T. Barnard 2003; see also Chapter 1). Since the era of the pre-colonial Malay kingdoms, the Minangkabau from western Sumatra have immigrated into this area. The Minangkabau established their settlements on the eastern coast and engaged in the exportation of gold, pepper and, then, the tin that was produced in the western highlands. They were intimately related to the establishment of the Malay kingdoms in this region as members of the ruling class. Their immigration has been continuous until today. Also, Chinese, Arab and European traders visited this area. In particular, the Chinese established a number of trading posts along the eastern coasts from the pre-colonial era. Their number

dramatically increased in the mid-nineteenth century when the Siak kingdom delegated timber harvesting to Singaporean Chinese merchants (*panglong system*; see Chapter 1), and in the 1940s when mainland Southeast Asia was involved in the turmoil of the Japanese intervention. From the early twentieth century, many Javanese also immigrated into this region first as contract labourers in Dutch times and, then, as forced labourers under the Japanese. After Indonesia achieved independence, the government also encouraged the Javanese to immigrate to this area. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, a number of Batak from northern Sumatra also came here to engage in labour around the oilfields. In addition to these migrants, the Bugis from Sulawesi and the Banjarnese from southeast Kalimantan have visited the Riau-Lingga Archipelago and south-eastern coastal areas of mainland Riau (Andaya 2008: 88-91; T. Barnard 2003: 14-15; Colombijn 2003b: 142).

In addition to these peoples, there are several more groups who identify themselves and are identified as indigenous, but have different identities from the Malays. They are the *orang asli* groups. The Talang Mamak live in the forest area of the mid-stream Indragiri River (Indragiri Hulu regency), a moderately hilly area. They cultivate rice on dry fields by slashing and burning rainforest, and also grow rubber and coconut trees. In addition, they engage in the collection and trade of a kind of agarwood (*kayu gaharu*), hunting in the forest and fishing on the tributaries of the Indragiri River (Isjoni 2005: 35-81). In recent years, the Riau branch of AMAN has begun activities to protect their land rights. The Bonai live in the upstream of the Rokan River (Rokan Hulu regency). For them, fishing in the tributaries of the Rokan River is an important source of livelihood (Isjoni 2002: 125-134; Pemerintah Propinsi Riau 2005: 22-40). The Orang Laut are traditionally sea nomads, most of whom live in Riau Islands province, but some live around the mouth of Kampar River (Pelalawan regency) (Pemerintah Propinsi Riau 2005: 22-40). They traditionally depended on the coastal resources and, in recent years, began demanding to have the waters in which they live recognised as belonging to them and inherited from their ancestors (Chou 2003, 2010; Chou and Wee 2007). The Petalangan are slash-and-burn cultivators of rice on dry fields living in the forests of the midstream of Kampar River (Pelalawan regency). While they have been regarded

as a part of the Malays, they are trying to protect the rainforest area claiming their historical use of the forests and demonstrating their position as an ‘*adat* community’ against the encroachment of the forest by palm plantations – they have established an ethno museum and a foundation that is the recipient of international support (Effendy 1997, 2002; Masuda 2009). Around the basin and estuary area of the Siak River, the Sakai, Rawa, Akit and Suku Asli make their homes. I shall describe them later.

According to a report written by the Riau government (Pemerintah Propinsi Riau 2005), the government recognises six groups as KAT which are the main target of government development projects because of their marginalised position (see Chapter 1).² The six groups are the Talang Mamak, Orang Laut, Bonai, Utan (Suku Asli), Sakai and Akit. According to a report written by the Department of Social Affairs in 1996 (see also Isjoni 2002: 17), the populations of these groups are: the Talang Mamak – 4816; the Bonai – 2070; the Orang Laut (including those in the Riau-Lingga Archipelago) – 7750; the Sakai – 2955; the Akit – 2736; and the Utan – 3884. However, these figures have fluctuated greatly depending on the census (see also Benjamin 2002: 23), and seem to be much smaller than their actual populations at present. According to a survey of the KAT by the Department of Social Affairs in the Bengkalis regency in 2010 (Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Bengkalis 2010: 52-56), the number of households (*kakak*) of the Sakai was 2094; that of the Akit – 1504; and that of the Suku Asli – 1439. Therefore, the populations of the Sakai and Akit are around ten thousand people and eight thousand people, respectively.³ In terms of the Suku Asli, there are 1385 households in the Meranti regency (unpublished data obtained from the Department of Social Affairs in Meranti regency in 2012) and some thousand people who were called the Rawa in Siak regency (see Chapter 1 and 4), in addition to the figure in the Bengkalis regency above. Therefore, the total

² The categorisation of *masyarakat terasing* or KAT varies according to the source cited (see Persoon 1998: 289). For example, Benjamin (2002: 23) quotes data about *masyarakat terasing* between 1990 and 1995 provided by the Department of Social Affairs in Jakarta, which says that there were eight groups of *masyarakat terasing* in Riau, i.e. the Orang Laut, the Talang Mamak, the Bonai, the Utan, the Akit, the Sakai, the Kuala/Laut and the Bertam. In addition, according to Kazuya Masuda (2009), while the Petalanagan had not been recognised as the KAT, they obtained the position until 2009.

³ I calculated their total populations based on an estimation of seeing that one household is averagely composed of five people. This estimation is derived from some fragmented data in the survey by the regency government (Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Bengkalis 2010).

population who identify themselves as Suku Asli is estimated at about fifteen thousand people around the area of the estuary.

Present-day Riau is characterised by three economic, political and geographical traits. The first trait is the spectacular industrial exploitation of its rich natural resources. At the turn of the twentieth century, rich oilfields were found around Duri city. Throughout the Japanese occupation and post-independence Indonesia, the oilfields and related infrastructure have been dramatically developed, and the oil industry is the largest business in the province (Colombijn 2003b: 343; Porath 2002: 775-776). Growing oil palm is also an important industry. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the vast rainforests that had covered most areas of the province were transformed into large-scale oil palm plantations. While these industries have generated many employment opportunities for the locals, the capital was controlled by the central government and foreign corporations. In 1989, an international development scheme was set up among Riau, Johor and Singapore: the 'Growth Triangle'. This international framework was established so that Singapore would be able to utilise cheap resources and labour from Malaysia and Indonesia. In return, Malaysia and Indonesia would obtain capital and technologies from Singapore. In the wake of such economic developments, the province has attracted many migrants from North and West Sumatra, as well as Java, and the landscape of Riau has undergone tremendous change (Chou and Wee 2002: 318-324). Riau is one of the richest provinces in Indonesia.

Second, Riau is a centre of Malay ethno-nationalism. Although Riau is regarded as originally the land of the Malays, they have been far from dominant in the economic and political domains as a result of continuous migrations of the Minangkabau and Javanese. This situation resulted in the separatist independence movement of Riau. The kingdoms of Riau and the southern coast of the Malay Peninsula had strong political connections throughout the pre-colonial era, which forged strong emotional connections between the Malays in Riau and the southern coast of the Malay Peninsula. After World War II, the Riau Malays plotted the independence of Riau from the Indonesian Republic several times aiming for the revival of the Sultanate of Johor-Riau. Under Suharto's regime, the celebration of Malay culture was organised through restoring historical graves and palaces,

establishing museums, conducting linguistic and literary research, and organising conferences (Wee 2002: 498-501). Just after the fall of Suharto, Riau Malay elites tried to seek independence, just like Aceh and Papua, by emphasising the value and distinctiveness of Malay culture. Unlike Aceh and Papua no violence was involved, yet it could not win the wide support of citizens and resulted in failure because the movement could not give clear and persuasive distinctions of boundaries, people and territory (Colombijn 2003b). At present, this ethno-nationalism among the Riau Malays has changed into a claim for indigeneity and self-determination within the territory.

Third, Riau is one of main arenas for environmentalism struggles in Indonesia. The area of rainforest is rapidly decreasing because of logging and clearing for plantations, and several national and international NGOs, such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Indonesian Forum for Environment (WALHI: *Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia*), are conducting research and campaigns for the purpose of protecting the rainforest.

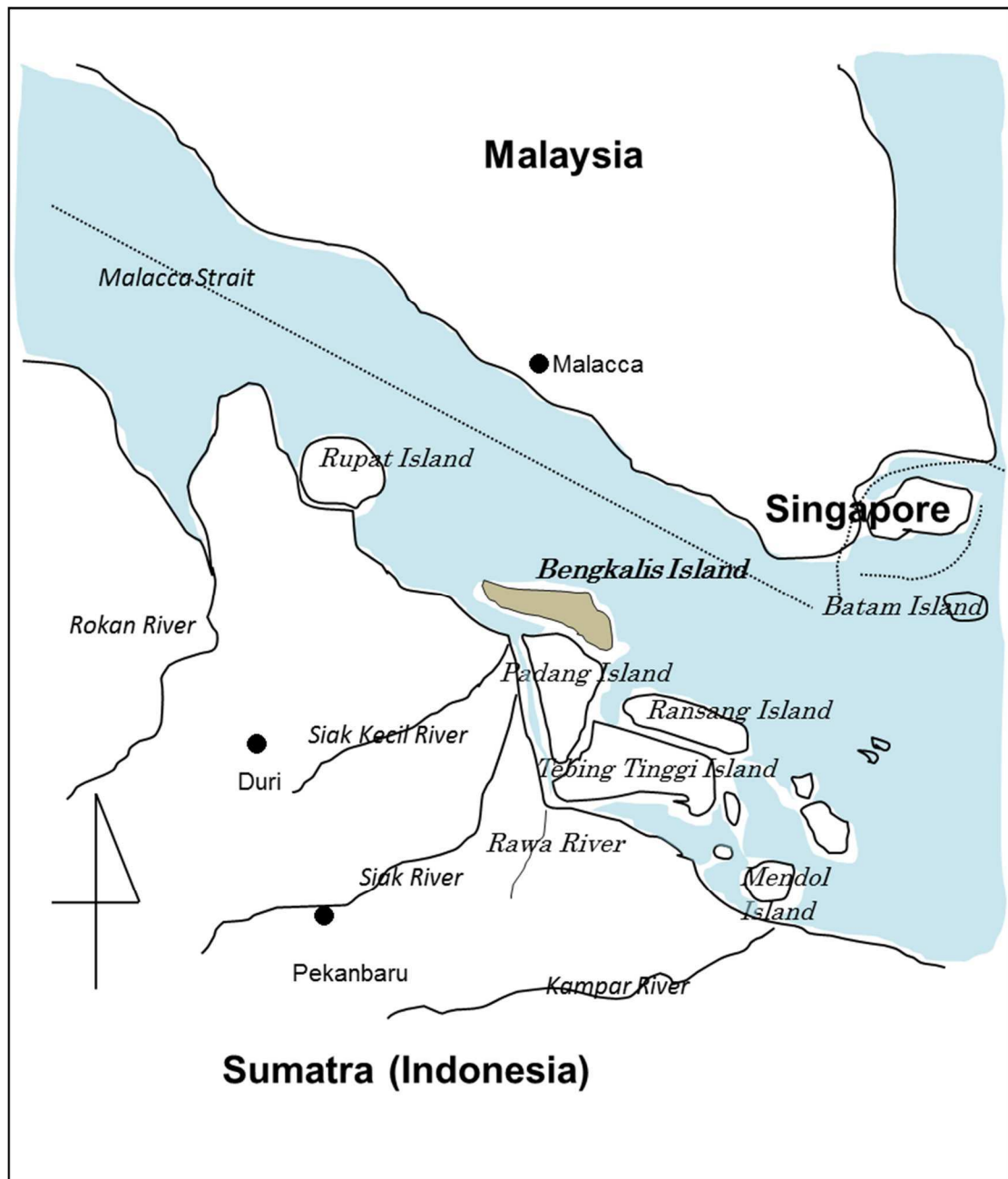
Through his historical study of the Siak kingdom, Timothy P. Barnard (2003:1-3) characterised the nature of the kingdom as '*kacu* (mixed)' (see also Chapter 1). With this word, he summarised the mixed and complex social and ecological situations of the kingdom. Although the situation has changed, the '*kacu*' feature of the Siak kingdom can still be applied to the present-day Riau province. In the complexity and mixture of environments and populations, various identities, cultures and political and economic agents are competing in this province.

The Bengkalis regency lies at the eastern coast of Riau province, which has an area of about seven thousand square kilometres and a population of five hundred thousand people. Facing the Malacca Strait, this area has been the centre of international communications with the outside world in Riau historically. Between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, this area was controlled by the Siak kingdom, which had its capital at Siak Sri Inderapra, which was situated at the midstream of the Siak River. When the Dutch government obtained control of this kingdom in the mid-nineteenth century, the Dutch administrative centre was moved to Bengkalis town on Bengkalis Island and temporarily controlled the whole area of the eastern coast of Sumatra (Colombijn 2003b: 341). After Indonesia achieved independence,

the realm of the Siak kingdom became the Bengkalis regency. Then, Dumai city and the Siak regency were separated in 1999 and Meranti Islands regency also split off in 2008. At present, Bengkalis regency consists of the coastal area, mainly Bengkalis and Rupert Islands, and an inland area, of which the political and economic centre is Duri city. The regency capital is Bengkalis town on Bengkalis Island.

The population of this area is as diverse as that of Riau province; there are Malays, Javanese, Minangkabau, ethnic Chinese, Batak and some *orang asli* groups. In the coastal area, the population of the ethnic Chinese is relatively large compared with other regions in Riau because of the introduction of the *panglong* system in the late nineteenth century. Some of them live in towns and engage in trading businesses. Some live in rural areas and earn their livelihoods from cultivating coconut and rubber gardens and fishing in the Malacca Strait and the South China Sea.

The Sakai are one of the *orang asli* groups who live in the moderately hilly area around the basin of the Mandau River, a tributary of the Siak River (Porath 2000, 2002, 2003). Traditionally, they practised shifting cultivation of tubers. Today, many Sakai villagers cultivate dry rice and most of them have converted to Islam. Throughout the pre-colonial era, they had a certain connection with the downstream Siak kingdom. They exchanged rainforest products for commodities, such as cloth, salt and iron, and recognised the sultan as their overlord in return for the sultan's protection of their territory. During the 1930s and the 1940s, oilfields began to be established in Sumatra, and the Sakai's region became a major oilfield. During Suharto's era, the Caltex oil company expanded the oilfields and roads throughout their ancestral rainforest. Following the expansion of the oilfields and roads, the Batak, Javanese and Minangkabau immigrated into the area and built settlements along the roads (Porath 2002a: 771-75). In the post-Suharto era, they began claiming their rights to ancestral lands through negotiations with the government (Porath 2000, 2002a, 2010).



Map 1. Coastal area of Riau province

The Rawa, Akit and Suku Asli live around the coasts and offshore islands. The Rawa live in the low and swampy basin of the Rawa River (Siak regency) in mainland Sumatra. While they were clearly documented in the colonial records, they have been confused with the Utan and Akit in the following periods. Indeed, they have strong social and cultural connections with the Suku Asli and Akit as will be explained in the following chapters, and identify themselves as Suku Asli Anak

Rawa allying with the Suku Asli living on offshore islands who were called Utan in the past. In their region, the Caltex oil company has sought oilfields, and an environmental NGO is working to protect the rainforest in alliance with the Rawa. The Akit live on Rupert Island. Their settlements are concentrated around the coast of the Morong Channel which runs through the centre of the island from east to west. Most of them earn their livelihood by harvesting mangrove timber that is used for charcoal. While the Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa were or are regarded as different *orang asli* groups in the state categorisation, they have had regular communications and similar cultural and economic traits.

The Suku Asli

The Suku Asli live mainly on islands that are divided by narrow water channels around the Siak estuary, mainly Bengkalis, Padang, Merbau, Ransang and Tebing Tinggi (except for Bengkalis Island, these islands belong to Meranti Islands regency). They are Austronesian speakers. Their language, the Malay dialect of this region, and the Indonesian that migrants speak are mutually intelligible.

As mentioned earlier, the Suku Asli are tribespeople. They have a history in which they have avoided the state control to a considerable extent and becoming Malay. They have been seen as ‘primitive’ or ‘backward’ from the state’s perspective and categorised as one of the KAT. In addition, they are post-foragers. Although there are several characteristic features embedded in the label ‘foragers’ (see Lee 2005: 19-20), I place a strong emphasis on their mobility in their past life: they were people who foraged around the coastal forests along the brackish rivers and channels with canoes, and engaged in fishing, gathering, hunting, trading and waged labour. Their settlements are scattered over the islands in a vast area. Although they are settled in villages at present, they still maintain some characteristics of their foraging past such as occasional moves to different communities, little dependence on agriculture, and rather loose political and social institutions.

Although they have been regarded as one of the *orang asli* groups in this region by the state, their identity cannot simply be framed by the category of ‘adat

community'. First, although the state has categorised them as the Utan since the eighteenth and nineteenth century, they have constructed an identity which goes beyond the state ethnic categorisation. In their foraging ways of life, they have strongly associated with the Akit and Rawa who were or are categorised as distinct groups by the state. As a result, rather than as Utan, they have traditionally identified themselves as *orang asli*, a comprehensive word that covers the identities as the Akit, Rawa and Utan. Second, their communities have historically incorporated many ethnic Chinese. In the late-nineteenth century, there was a mass immigration of male Chinese labourers into the forest areas where the Utan lived, and they married with Utan females. Their descendants are called *peranakan*, or 'the mixed-blooded', and they have maintained the Chinese way of ancestral worship and other elements of Chinese culture. As a result, in their society, there are heterogeneous traditional practices and identities.

Therefore, it is different to see them as an ethnic 'group' in which people share a common identity based on their culture or descent. If we adopt a strict definition of 'ethnic group' (Brubaker 2003: 12; Scott 2009: 256), they cannot be seen as an 'ethnic group'. Furthermore, if we approach them in the criterial fashion, they are not an '*adat* community', as they have heterogeneous traditional practices and histories within their community.

Despite of this diversity and fluidity of *adat* and identity, in recent years, they developed their 'indigenous movement' emphasising their position as an '*adat* community'. In 2005, they established an ethnic organisation, IKBBSA (*Ikatan keluarga besar batin Suku Asli*; Suku Asli Headman's League)⁴ which has a dual role – it is a headmen's council and the primary means of communicating with the government. In 2006, they negotiated with the regency government and succeeded in having them officially recognise their new ethnic name Suku Asli – now, they are the Suku Asli. Since 2010, they have held periodic ethnic meetings and festivals and demonstrated Suku Asli traditional culture in front of government officials. Around 2011, they designated Buddhism as traditional *agama*. In 2013, they applied for

⁴ '*Batin*' is an Arabic term that means 'inner' and generally used in the Malay world. However, in Suku Asli usage, it always indicates 'headman'. I use this term in the meaning of 'headman' in this thesis (see also footnote 54).

ownership of the mangrove swamps in which they have traditionally lived emphasising that they were their 'ancestral lands'.

However, their way of manifesting indigeneity is quite unique. First, while in many cases of indigenous movements in the world people confronted issues that could bring about predicaments such as land competition with their neighbours, large-scale deforestation or the designation of national parks, the Suku Asli are not facing such urgent issues. Second, while international or national NGOs of outsiders often support and encourage people to protect their rights or environment, no NGOs have worked in their communities in the Suku Asli communities. Third, while Indonesian indigenous movements are characterised by the recovery of past authority, i.e. '*adat* revivalism', the Suku Asli do not seek the revival of past authorities or 'traditional' authenticity. Rather, the trigger for their movement was a government intervention, through which they were encouraged to establish an ethnic organisation. Subsequently, through this organisation, they have tried to communicate directly with the government and establish their new position as an '*adat* community' within the Indonesian state.

Anthropological issues around the Malacca Strait

Southeast Asianists have been attracted to the topic of ethnic identity and category, as the populations in this area have the enormous diversity of society and culture. This has been especially so for scholars who study the regions around the Malacca Strait because this area is characterised by the historical frequent moves of the populations. In classic ethnological approaches, scholars tried to classify ethnic categories and their cultures focusing on the differences of 'race' such as 'Negritos', 'Veddoids' and 'Proto-Malays', which was derived from the difference of the periods when the people had migrated to a region from south western China or elsewhere (e.g. Winstedt 1961; Loeb 1935). However, over the last three decades, archaeological, linguistic and human biological evidences have shown that it is hard to explain their socio-cultural differentiation by this perspective (Benjamin 2002: 18-19).

In this situation, recent scholars have explored the issues of ethnic identity and category focusing on the interactions between agencies of local populations and the state (see Steedly 1999). For example, T. Barnard (2003), a historian studying the eastern coast of Sumatra, explores how the Siak kingdom formed its control over the eastern Sumatra on the basis of the *kacu* situation of ethnicity as mentioned above. Leonard Y. Andaya (2008), also a historian studying the Malacca Strait, scrutinises the core of Malay ethnicity describing the historical interactions between the Malay states and various local populations. The studies of tribespeople, whose identity may have been seen as primordial in public, also adopt a similar perspective. Benjamin (2002: 9) examines the formation of the Orang Asli in Malaysia and other tribespeople elsewhere in the Malay World and suggests that ‘tribal societies are *secondary* formulations, characterised by the positive steps they have taken to hold themselves apart from incorporation into the state apparatus’. Analysing the history of mainland Southeast Asia, James Scott (2009) takes one step further and explains the formulation of tribespeople by their struggles with the historical state policies such as taxation, corvée and slavery.

On the other hand, at an ethnographic level, more and more anthropologists focus on the process of how people embody ethnic categories as their own identity within their societies. Porath (2003) describes the shamanic healing ritual of the Sakai and suggests that the ritual procedures can be seen as a process of the reconstruction of individual and group identity. Cynthia Chou (2003; 2010) researched Orang Laut communities in Riau-Lingga Archipelago and has written two books. In the first (2003), she scrutinises exchange between the Orang Laut and Malays and reveals that their ethnic boundary is configured by their attitudes toward magic and money. In the second book (2010), she explores how the Orang Laut developed their attachment to territory in their semi-nomadic way of life on the sea and why they began claiming the right to the territory in relation to state development projects. Nicholas Long (2013) examines Malay identity in Riau Archipelago in ‘decentralised’ Indonesian politics. Considering the fluidity and dynamism of ethnic identification as being Malay, he suggests that ‘acts of ethnic identification might be contingent and circumstantial’; however, ‘by destabilising the

identity of so-called Malays and thereby problematising the category of “ethnicity”, it actually reified the “Malayness” they were claiming’ (2013: 18).

This thesis contributes to some of these issues of identity and category especially in relation to indigeneity. More specifically, first, this thesis contributes to the issues of how the categories of tribespeople emerged, how they have maintained their identities, and why the categories were associated with indigeneity. Considering geographic settings, national and regional history, and social and cultural differences, this thesis reveals a way of transactions between tribespeople and state politics in the arena of indigeneity. Second, this thesis deals with the complexity and involvement of various identities. The Suku Asli had heterogeneous identities in their tribal way of life, and, furthermore, there are many people who have Chinese identity derived from their ancestry. Exploring the boundaries within their community as well as with outsiders, this thesis describes the dynamic transactions of such identities. Finally, this thesis explores the detailed processes of destabilising, problematising and embodying indigenous identity. The Suku Asli have not simply adopted the government policies to them, but also objectified and abstracted their thoughts and practices, and eventually reified their integrated indigenous identity in the state politics. This thesis provides a salient depiction of the construction of local identity, which could be applied to tribespeople not only in Indonesia but also elsewhere in the world.

Fieldwork and methodology

I conducted my fieldwork between January and December 2012 (twelve months) in the village of Teluk Pambang, which is situated at the eastern edge of Bengkalis Island. I lived in a Suku Asli house, I also visited other villages, and sometimes travelled to settlements beyond Bengkalis – including the Rawa region, Rupert Island and Tebing Tinggi Island – for the purpose of getting to know the Suku Asli (and the Akit and Rawa) living in each place. While most of the ethnographic information I utilise in this thesis stems from this period of fieldwork, I also use some complementary data obtained in Rupert, where I conducted fieldwork between July

2006 and December 2007 (eighteen months) in the Akit villages of Titi Akar and Hutan Panjang.⁵

Before the fieldwork, I had several plans about how I would go about collecting data on indigeneity. First, I planned to live in a Suku Asli village. By establishing 'rapport' with the Suku Asli and learning their language, in a village context, I hoped to understand their world more deeply. Second, as my interest was in transactions between the Suku Asli and state politics, I would concentrate on the networks of Suku Asli leaders as well as government officials. In particular, the broad network of Suku Asli leaders was important. Through my work with Suku Asli leaders, I expected to accumulate significant information on the implementation of government programmes in each village. Third, I would seek as much information as I could on Suku Asli *adat*. I would gather and, if possible, make a list of their various *adat* prescriptions and practices, and explore *adat*'s relationship to state policies. Integrating these data, I would explore Suku Asli engagement, struggle, negotiation and compromise with the state. With one exception, my plans worked out quite well.

My move to a Suku Asli village happened smoothly. My first and strongest supporter was Pak Ajui, the *batin* headman in the Bengkalis regency. He was well respected in the village and the wider area. He managed to arrange my host family and introduce me to a number of elders and *adat* functionaries who were willing and able to facilitate my work. In this context, particularly helpful were Pak Odang and Koding, who had a great deal of knowledge of Suku Asli *adat* and history. I was extremely fortunate to choose the 'right kind' of village – that is, a village that was at the very centre of Suku Asli engagement with development programmes; something I did not know at the beginning but I found out almost as soon as I arrived in the area.

At Bengkalis town, where I had to complete the various administrative procedures for my research permit, I met a number of officials from the Department of Social Affairs. They promised support and provided me with a new report on the development programmes for *orang asli* groups in the area (DINAS Sosial Kabupaten Bengkalis 2010). They explained the purpose of the various government programmes and gave me their views on the life of the Suku Asli. After that first

⁵ The focus of this fieldwork was investigating shamanic practices among the Akit. The thesis was submitted to Tokyo Marine Science and Technology as a Masters dissertation (Osawa 2009).

meeting, an official took me to a house of a *batin* headman that was the closest to the town. The *batin* was Pak Atang in the village of Selat Baru. When we arrived at his house, he was about to go to a wedding ceremony held in the village of Teluk Pambang. He took me to the village and introduced me to Pak Ajui and other leaders invited to the ceremony from the village itself and further afield. After talking with them for a while, I found out that Teluk Pambang was the centre of the Suku Asli ethnic organisation, IKBBSA. IKBBSA had the potential to be an excellent focus for my research, and so I asked Pak Ajui to allow me to live in the village. I returned to Bengkalis town, Pak Ajui contacted me through a mobile phone a few days later to tell me that he had arranged a host family for me. I moved to the village just a few days after my first visit.

The head of my host family was Pak Kiat, and his family included himself, his wife and two unmarried sons. He had built a new house made of concrete a few years ago, which had a room available. While the house did not have a bathroom or electricity, my stay there was comfortable. Pak Kiat was thirty nine; he occasionally worked as a temporary labourer in road construction and the logging of mangrove timber. His wife was in her early forties and worked on a coconut plantation owned by Pak Kimdi, an ethnic Chinese in the village. Their sons were in their late teens, and worked together with their parents. Just like other Suku Asli villagers, they had little schooling. Pak Kiat, his wife and elder son had completed their primary school education. The younger son had graduated from junior high school in the village and wanted to enter high school, but his family circumstances did not allow him to do so – there was not enough money. Staying at their house and utilising the vast network of Ajui's friend and acquaintances, I managed to establish relations with most of the villagers in Teluk Pambang, but also to visit leaders' houses in other villages, which are generally a dozen kilometres distant, with a motorbike.

From the very beginning of our contact, I could communicate with Suku Asli villagers in (what appeared to me as) a mix of Indonesian and Malay that I had learnt during my previous fieldwork in Rupert. Like other *orang asli* groups in this area (e.g. the Sakai; see Porath 2002), the Suku Asli in Teluk Pambang speak a Malay dialect which exhibits a number of differences from the Malay and Indonesian that are spoken by their Javanese and Malay neighbours (different accents, a number of

lexical differences, and so forth). Some Suku Asli called it ‘Suku Asli language’ (*bahasa Suku Asli*; *bahasa asli*). However, the difference was not important. ‘Suku Asli language’ and Malay are more than mutually intelligible. Furthermore, it varies from place to place even among Suku Asli communities. According to a Suku Asli informant in Teluk Pambang, it was often more difficult to communicate with a Suku Asli living in a distant community than with a Malay living in Teluk Pambang. Malay villagers in Teluk Pambang also thought Suku Asli spoke Malay. According to them, while the meaning of some Suku Asli words was sometimes obscure, such differences were generally found even among Malay villages in this area. A well known, albeit slightly old, Malay-English dictionary (Wilkinson 1957) endorsed this opinion; I could actually find most Suku Asli words in it.⁶

Because of this linguistic similarity, many Suku Asli villagers could easily adapt their accent and expressions to those nearer to standard Indonesian or Malay. They used such adapted accents and expressions not only when they talked with Javanese and Malays in the village, but also when they talked about political topics. My informants, mainly leaders of Suku Asli, were good at this. When they talked with me, they seemed to change accent almost unconsciously. While I came to understand their accent and actually use it in daily life by the end of my fieldwork, I mostly communicated with them in the ‘mixed’ language of Indonesian and Malay because it was easier for all of us to understand.

Of course, language is highly significant in the context of development and Suku Asli relations with the state. For instance, in later chapters, I explore the meaning of words such as *adat* and *agama*. The significance of these words emerged in the political context of unequal relations with outsiders and the need for ‘development’. If we were to think of *bahasa Suku Asli* as an indigenous language, *adat* and *agama* are almost certainly not indigenous terms. They reflect the way in which Suku Asli communities were forced to think of their lives in and through terms imported from ‘outsiders’ in terms of ‘religion’ (*agama*) and ‘tradition’ (*adat*). In many ways, it is this ‘positioning’ that lies at the heart of this thesis. It is also remarkable that because of the language similarity with Malay and the linguistic differences among Suku Asli

⁶ On the other hand, it was relatively difficult to find *bahasa asli* words in Indonesian-English dictionaries published in recent years.

communities, my informants do not distinguish an 'us' and a 'them' based on language. Language, which may often be deeply associated with one's ethnic identity, is by no means a criterion of ethnic identification in their society.

Both in terms of adapting their language and sharing their understanding of the world, Suku Asli leaders were very cooperative with my research. For one thing, because of my previous experience in the area, introducing myself to them and explaining my research was fairly straightforward. From the very first contact with them at the wedding ceremony, it became clear that they had a good impression of me because of my previous fieldwork. They knew that I had conducted fieldwork in Rupert; they had kinship connections with the Akit and had heard rumours that a Japanese anthropologist had researched Akit tradition. As the stories and rumours about my work in Rupert were positive, they appeared to accept me without suspicion. Ajui's support in particular broadened my network. He showed me around Teluk Pambang and introduced me not only to Suku Asli villagers but also some Malays and Javanese in the village. When he had meetings or events he needed to attend in other villages, he took me along and introduced me to other Suku Asli leaders. Such leaders kindly explained to me the situation in their villages and welcomed my occasional visits to their houses. Through this network, I obtained much of my ethnographic data on the Suku Asli way of life, history and engagement with the state – not only in Teluk Pambang but also in other villages.

The leaders' cooperative attitude was also associated with the emergence of indigeneity in Suku Asli society. As I describe in this thesis, Suku Asli leaders were trying to have the government recognise their community's position as an '*adat* community'. They almost certainly thought my research, which was supported by the government and dealt with their tradition, could be helpful to their activities. In addition, as I describe in Chapter 4, the efficacy of leadership in Suku Asli society is related to communication with outsiders. It would have been significant for them that, through communication with me, they could further their own reputation and the reputation of their village. Of course, this is not to suggest that their cooperation was a simple reflection of local politics. In many ways, they were actually interested in my research. They found my questions useful and seemed to relish the opportunity to

speaking about their community in ways that clarified both their tradition and their quest for a better life.

Beyond my work with leaders, I tried to establish relationships of trust with 'ordinary' villagers in Teluk Pampang as well. In general, they were also cooperative. My everyday routine involved visiting villagers' houses and talking about their life histories, economic activities, families, fears and hopes. I also participated in their economic and religious activities in the village. I followed their work in the rainforest and mangrove forest trying to learn how they used the forest resources. I attended shamanic séances and asked questions about their cosmology. A great deal of interesting information emerged from these encounters. More than that, little by little, they gave me the opportunity to understand better the information I was collecting from the various leaders by contextualising their quest for Suku Asli recognition in the everyday lives of ordinary people and the village world. Through these activities, I became especially close to some of them.

In addition to Pak Ajui and Kiat, Pak Odang and Koding – who frequently appear in my ethnographic descriptions – were my main informants. They were all extremely knowledgeable about Suku Asli tradition and history and they had experience of engagement with particular state interventions and the world of 'development'.

However, it is important to recognise that my main informants were men. This is because (i) it is men who usually engage in political communication with the state and (ii) women often hesitated to talk with a foreign male researcher. For instance, when I visited a house, women often introduced their husband to me and retreated to a back room. Yet, the wives of Pak Kiat and Ajui were good informants. As I had the opportunity to talk with them every day, they managed to share with me their perspective on the village and life in it.

Nevertheless, in one respect, my initial plan did not work out very well. While leaders in different villages kindly explained to me their village situation and history, I found that it was difficult to explore the significance of this data in detailed ways. A number of repeat visits and interviews were simply not enough. To make it work, I would have had to spend much more time with each one of them and understand their lived experiences in the villages. Consequently, I revised my original plan:

instead of trying to obtain data about all the villages, the leaders of which I had met, I decided to focus on the situation in Teluk Pambang. As a result, I mainly describe the situation of Teluk Pambang in this thesis, and information about other villages is used only as complementary data.

Most of my interviews were conducted in an unstructured fashion. When I visited villagers' houses, I did not have many fixed questions in my mind, and I carried on conversations about everyday things without trying to pre-determine their direction. If there was something interesting in a particular context, I tried to explore the topic further. In this way, I tried to document as well as explicate their complex views of their world and, at the same time, engage with these views as emerging in a form closely related to their everyday life. In parallel with these unstructured interviews, I conducted a structured survey on the family members (and their backgrounds) of 185 households in the western part of Teluk Pambang (see footnote 29). This survey was necessary for the purpose of clarifying occasional moves, questions of individual descent, and marriage patterns between Suku Asli and *peranakan*.

However, beyond interviews and surveys, it is important to emphasise that it was villagers' readiness to share with me their everyday lives that mattered. I had the opportunity to discuss and observe these lives in many different situations – from visiting Bengkalis town or spending time over a coffee in a local *warung*, to working in their gardens or following them in the mangrove forest, I was allowed to learn something about their fears and hopes and, perhaps, share in them a little as well. For that experience, I will be eternally grateful.

My ethnographic strategy was to bring together the government's images of and interventions in Suku Asli society and Suku Asli's adoptions of and engagements with these images and interventions. As a result of this engagement, the Suku Asli have conceptualised and started to re-configure their identity, habits, categories and authenticity. In this thesis, by analysing such changes, I explore how the Indonesian version of indigeneity has been introduced to Suku Asli society, what has changed as a result of this introduction, and what kind of actions are emerging in relation to these changes.

In my ethnographic descriptions, I describe not only the facts of Suku Asli history and their way of life, but also their attempts to reflect on both. As mentioned above, indigeneity is a kind of perspective that was introduced into their world in recent years. The Suku Asli are not familiar with the international concepts of ‘indigeneity’ and ‘indigenous peoples’. Furthermore, at the time of my fieldwork, only a few members of local elites knew the terms ‘*adat* community’ and ‘customary law community’, and did not use these terms when explaining their position in a consistent way. Quite often, instead of these terms, they explained their perspectives on who they are through their own experiences and ‘cultural logic’ (see Long 2009), which have been formed in and through their ancestral practices, historical communications with outsiders, and connections with the land – experiences and ‘cultural logics’ which, although they have started to change, have not yet been fully objectified in the form of an ‘*adat* community’. By describing my conversations with them and exploring their reflections on the concepts of ‘*adat* community’ or indigeneity, I have tried to reveal how the Suku Asli have started to construct their own indigeneity. Furthermore, by analysing such discourses and comparing them with everyday practices, I explore unconscious and subjective attachments, aspirations, desires and beliefs in the Suku Asli world. These attachments, hopes and desires are all related to ‘indigeny’ (see Benjamin 2002, 2012, forthcoming; Chapter 3), and have often been more influential in Suku Asli responses to government interventions than abstract ideas like ‘indigenous group’.

Structure of the thesis

Chapters 1 and 2 focus on the topic of ethnic identity as Suku Asli, which became the basis of the emergence of their indigeneity. While Chapter 1 deals with the state categorisation of *orang asli* groups on the eastern coast of Sumatra, Chapter 2 is about identity based on their own perspective, a perspective that has been constituted by their historical experiences. From Chapter 3, I explore the social changes which emerged through the use of indigeneity in their world. Therefore, in the first section of each chapter, I described the historical background of each topic

before the emergence of indigeneity, and analyse the process and results of this emergence in the following sections.

More specifically, Chapter 1 is about the history of the relationship between the state and tribespeople in eastern Sumatra. Some people of eastern Sumatra were categorised as tribespeople in the process of state formation between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and this category has been transformed into that of ‘indigenous people’ as a result of the recent changes in Indonesian politics. In Chapter 2, uncoupling the idea of the ethnic category derived from state politics, I describe Suku Asli identity and their historical relationship with the Akit, Rawa and Chinese. While they historically have shared a clear opposition to Muslims who have their settlements near to those of the Suku Asli, their contents of culture are far from integrated. Chapter 3 deals with their relationship with space and livelihood resources. Describing their traditional life and the transition of land ownership in Teluk Pambang, I show a process within which they started conceptualising their lands as ‘descendants’ land’ and ‘ancestral land’. Chapter 4 is concerned with the establishment of the ethnic organisation, IKBBSA. IKBBSA was established in the recent political atmosphere of ‘decentralisation’ rather than Suku Asli aspirations, but Suku Asli elites have driven the organisation of ordinary villagers and the documentation of their ethnic identity in accordance with the government image of an ‘*adat* community’. Chapter 5 analyses the transformation of their *adat*. While more and more people are recognising *adat* as something related to art or performance under the government policies of culturalisation, it encourages ordinary villagers to form their identity as Suku Asli through participation in these activities. Chapter 6 describes the process of the introduction of Buddhism as their ‘ancestral religion’. The adopted image of a distinctive and integrated ‘indigenous people’ is reflected in their having an *agama* – that is, a religion which is both recognised and supported by the state.

Chapter 1

Under State Politics: State Formation, Ethnic Category and Development Subjects

In Riau, the term which indicates tribespeople or indigenous people is *orang asli* the same as the Orang Asli in Malaysia. They have been seen as the people who have lived in peripheral areas distant from political centres, maintained their traditional way of life, and thus as different from the ‘civilised’ and dominant population of the Malays, Javanese and Minangkabau. Most of the *orang asli* groups are also listed in the government’s category of KAT, and regarded as the main subjects of the government development projects. Isjoni, an Indonesian anthropologist in Riau, summarises the KAT profile: (1) they live in small and segmented communities and usually depend on the natural resources around them; (2) therefore, they have poor material culture, are not really associated with *agama*, and follow their own *adat* without receiving benefits from the state development projects (*penbagunan*) (2002: 20-21; see also DINAS Sosial Kabupaten Bengkalis 2010: 1-5). These images show, *orang asli* as ‘primitive’ and ‘backward’ people who have maintained in peripheral areas the ‘old’ ways of life inherited from their ancestors, and have not been ‘civilised’ in modern Indonesia. In short, *orang asli* in Riau have been seen as tribespeople in a primordial fashion.

However, some recent studies point out that tribespeople in Southeast Asia have not existed or maintained themselves in a primordial way but have been formed in the politics of the state. Benjamin (2002) defines ‘tribespeople’ as people living in ‘particular socio-political circumstances of life’ within state politics and suggests that all tribal societies are ‘secondary formulations’ therein. Negating the claim that they follow ‘the dictates of some collective inborn drive’ or hold ‘total collectivities’ as ethnic groups in a primordial fashion, he emphasises that ‘being tribal’ is a result of the ‘individual choice’ of the people in locating themselves in the state system (2002: 8-12). Scott (2009: 127-177) also suggests that the people living in the ‘hilly area’ of mainland Southeast Asia became tribespeople in politics and economy during state formation, and describes the fashion in which they run away from state raids,

imposition of slavery, corvée and taxation. If we consider the historical and ethnographic records, we can see that their arguments apply to the situation of *orang asli* in eastern Sumatra as well. In the process whereby the state extends its power as it seeks more resources, labour and tax revenue, some people living in its realm became tribespeople or *orang asli*.

Thus, tribespeople or *orang asli* are formed in transactions between state politics and people's choice. In this chapter, I would like to focus on the state politics aspect, and explore it using mainly information from historical and ethnographic records. The essential tools or arts for the state in governing the population are identification, categorisation and certification. To do so, the state can objectify the people with whom they need to intervene and control them more effectively and easily (Scott 1998, 2009; Li 2000). This technique of objectification is important particularly to control tribespeople who have kept more distance from state direct control than the 'civilised' populations. By identifying and categorising them, the state can show not only how they should be but also how the 'civilised' population in the state should be. Such politics have formed the present-day *orang asli* image.

First, I summarise the history of the pre-colonial era around the Malacca Strait and the formation of the category of *orang asli* as non-Malays. Second, I analyse the hierarchic and regional categorisations given to *orang asli* under the Siak kingdom and the Dutch colonial government. Third, I explore a series of policies that have been implemented for tribespeople since Indonesia's achievement of independence. The position of *orang asli* groups has changed dynamically from period to period. The process of statecraft formed the category and image of tribespeople in eastern Sumatra, and they eventually became an 'indigenous people' or '*adat* community', a community to which very recent government policies have attached a specific meaning.

***Orang asli* under the pre-colonial and colonial state in the Malacca Strait**

Outside the formation of the maritime states and 'Malayu' people

Let us begin with the formation of the early maritime state in the Malacca Strait, which can go back to the period of the ancient kingdom, Srivijaya. The Malacca Strait has been the principal maritime route connecting China, India, and the Middle East for the last two thousand years, and the communities along its shores continued to benefit from the trade for more than two thousand years (Andaya 2008: 50). After China became a powerful state and expanded its maritime trade in the first millennium, the importance of this area as a trade transit point increased. In particular, the port cities of southern Sumatra gradually developed because the southern area was the end point of the northeast monsoon winds that provided tailwinds for the ships from East Asia (Andaya 2008: 51). The ancient Hindu-Buddhist kingdom of Srivijaya thus emerged around the area of present-day Palembang in southern Sumatra. Changing its capital repeatedly, this maritime trading kingdom ruled the area for several centuries and exerted its influence on the ports of Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, western Java and mainland Southeast Asia (Andaya 2008: 78). Srivijaya control gradually declined from the eleventh century, and by the thirteenth century, the area of southern Sumatra became subservient to the Javanese kingdoms of Kediri and Singasari (Andaya 2008: 57-59). At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Srivijaya was succeeded by the kingdom of Melaka established by people who claimed they were descendants of the Srivijaya royal family. This kingdom rapidly became a prosperous trading centre in the strait during the fifteenth century, supported by the Emperor of the Ming dynasty of China. Then, the kingdom was conquered by the Portuguese in 1511 (Andaya 2008).

Andaya summarises the characteristic features of the Srivijaya kingdom between the seventh and fourteenth centuries as follows:

- (1) an entrepot state involved in maritime international commerce; (2) a ruler endowed with sacred attributes and powers; (3) governance based on kinship ties; (4) a mixed population with specific and mutually advantageous roles in the

economy; (5) a realm whose extent was determined not by territory but by shifting locations of its subject. (2008: 67-68)

In short, the power of the Srivijaya kingdom was concentrated on controlling ports, maritime commerce and its populations, but not on the territories that the state in the following eras were interested in (Anderson 1990). In other words, the political power of the Srivijaya was not really exerted as far as the peripheries of the realm, for example, the ‘upstream’ of the port centre or isles and inlets of the coasts and their populations. These characteristics transferred largely unchanged to the Melaka kingdom (Andaya 2008: 68).

Although there are no sources which deal with the identity of the population of Srivijaya recorded at the time, the records in the era of its successor, Melaka kingdom, show that the ‘Malayu’ identity gradually became prestigious in the realm of the kingdom during the Srivijaya period (Andaya 2008: 60). The term ‘Malayu’ is found in Chinese texts in the seventh century, which corresponds with ‘Malay’ in English and ‘*Melayu*’ in Indonesian and Malay. However, according to Andaya (2008: 59-60), this word did not mean a fixed ethnicity, which may be used like ‘the Malays’ in the present day. Rather, ‘Malayu’ identity was initially associated with the state polity – that is, the people subject to the rule Srivijaya and its successors were identified as ‘the Malayu people’. Then, following that, the Melaka kingdom developed its control over the Malacca Strait and South China Sea through the reinforcement of the ruler-subject relationship, a maritime trading network, and kinship alliances. The elite in the remote ports adopted the styles and ideas from Melaka because they symbolised their legitimacy as rulers. For example, the language used in Melaka became the trade and diplomatic lingua franca throughout the strait and the South China Sea; Islam, to which the Melaka royal family converted in the mid-fifteenth century, was introduced through the kingdom’s sphere of influence (Andaya 2008: 71). Such a prestigious status as ‘Malayu’ prevailed over not only amongst the elites but also their subjects through the expansion of kinship networks until the late eighteenth century (Andaya 2008: 71-77). Through these processes, ‘Malayu’ transformed from its polity-basis into an ethnicity, in which the people were ‘culturally’ connected until the sixteenth century.

Records before the sixteenth century of the people who are now called *orang asli* in eastern Sumatra are extremely scarce. However, there are some writings about them from this early period. First, there were people who lived in the places where the maritime-port state could not adequately exert its power. These people were usually found in the inland areas, and such political centre-peripheral relationships are expressed in the schema of ‘upstream’ and ‘downstream’ or ‘hill’ and ‘valley’ in the studies of Southeast Asia (e.g. Bronson 1978; Kathirithamby-Wells 1993; Li 1999; Scott 2009). On the other hand, the coastal space of eastern Sumatra, with its numerous isles and inlets, also had places where state control was barely exercised (T. Barnard 2003). In both cases, such spaces and populations were related to the present-day *orang asli* groups. Second, although they lived in the peripheral area of the state’s realm, they had a certain connection with the state. For the maritime trading state, products harvested in the forest area such as camphor, benzoin and beeswax were precious commodities, and the people harvested the products and exchanged them with the state’s subjects (Andaya 2008: 221; Kathirithamby-Wells 1993: 80). Third, however, they were not much subject to state control. It is certain that some *orang asli* groups came under state control before the sixteenth century. For example, the Orang Laut supported the establishment and extension of the Melaka kingdom by acting as militia and pirates in the maritime world receiving titles from the kingdom (Chou 2002: 24-29, 2010: 40-50). However, around the estuary area of the Siak River, many of the coastal forest dwellers were not subsumed in the politics of the Melaka-Johor kingdoms (T. Barnard 2003: 18-19). In these peripheral areas, they maintained their autonomy and traditional way of life in the fashion of hunter-gatherers and shifting cultivators without strong political systems. In short, their position was economically connected with but politically separated from state control.

Therefore, in the process of expanding the ‘Malayu’ identity, some of these forest dwellers did not adopt the ‘Malayu’ identity of the state polity, and non-‘Malayu’ identity was formed in relation to the people who had ‘Malayu’ identity. On the periphery of the Malay Peninsula, on the one hand, such people would have been the ancestors of the Orang Asli in present-day Malaysia. Yet there were also such people on the coast of Sumatra. They might have been the ‘Veddoid’ and

‘Negrite’ populations (Loeb 1935: 290-295; Moszkowski 1909), indigenous Austronesian speakers who just lived at places far away from the political centres, the sea nomads living in boats (Chou 2010 42-46), or even the ‘Malayu’ who had fled state control to avoid raids, taxation and slavery (see Scott 2009: 127-177).

Although these people must have been related to the ancestors of present-day Suku Asli and other *orang asli* in the eastern coast of Sumatra, it seems difficult to suggest that they are their direct ancestors because these peoples would have frequently moved from place to place in this era and many of them were absorbed in the state becoming ‘the Malays’ in the following periods. As Benjamin (2002: 8-9) pointed out, more than a few of such peoples became the Malays following the state control and adopting the ‘Malayu’ identity. For example, some of the Kubu became Malays before the nineteenth century (Andaya 2008: 205), and some of the Utan became Malays in the early nineteenth century, as mentioned below.

The establishment of Siak kingdom and subordination to the state

After the Portuguese conquest of Melaka in 1511, the Malay kingdom was divided into two – that is, the Johor kingdom in the southern coast of the Malay Peninsula that the royal family of Melaka kingdom fled to and the Aceh kingdom in the northern edge of Sumatra that had been the successor of the Samudera/Pasai kingdom, a part of Srivijaya (Andaya 2008: 114-118). While the new Johor kingdom was targeted by the Portuguese and the Aceh kingdom during the sixteenth century, the centre of Malay culture and international trade in the Malacca Strait was dominated by the Aceh kingdom. The kingdom became prosperous as Middle-Eastern traders sponsored it. As a result of the close communication with them, ‘Malayu’ identity was increasingly associated with Islam between the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century (Andaya 2008: 108-145). On the other hand, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) took control of the trade in Java around the first half of the seventeenth century, and the Netherlands obtained power in the Indonesian archipelago. The VOC assisted the Johor kingdom and occupied Melaka in 1641. The VOC achieved dominance over trade in Sumatra, instead of the

Portuguese. In 1718, Raja Kecil, possibly a Minangkabau adventurer, took over the throne of the Johor kingdom with support of Minangkabau, Malay and Orang Laut communities in eastern Sumatra (T. Barnard 2003: 55-56). In 1722, a son of the former Sultan of Johor retrieved the throne from Raja Kecil with the support of the Bugis from southern Sulawesi. Raja Kecil fled to the coastal area of eastern Sumatra and established the Siak kingdom (T. Barnard 2003).

During this period, the eastern coast of central Sumatra emerged as an important supply centre of timber for shipbuilding with the increase in the number of European traders going back and forth. At the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century, the VOC and Johor kingdom signed a series of treaties for trading in timber (T. Barnard 1998: 90), and the VOC tried to obtain timber in this region. In harvesting the timber, it was necessary to seek the cooperation of local communities for the safety of the operations and the ability to trace the species of wood suitable for shipbuilding. In this situation, the Siak kingdom tried to control the forest and coastal dwellers. Between the eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century, the forest and coastal dwellers were subsumed under state control (T. Barnard 1998: 92).

The earliest description of the forest and coastal dwellers around the mouth of the Siak River appears in some Dutch and British articles. Balthasar Bort (1927: 177) refers to the indigenous people living around Bengkalis Island in the mid-seventeenth century as ‘a Malay tribe of very uncivilised people, who live with their wives and children in their vessels among the islands roving hither and thither’. The people seem to be related to the Orang Laut who live mainly in the Riau-Lingga Archipelago at present. William Dampier, who sailed around the world and visited Melaka in 1689, recorded that Captain Johnson, who had gone to Bengkalis Island to buy a sloop, was killed on the coast between Bengkalis and Rupert Islands in an ambush at night by ‘a band of armed Malaysians’ using canoes, and that a headman of the Johor kingdom at Bengkalis gave an account of it by arguing that the government could not control the ‘wild unruly Men, not subject to Government’ (Dampier 1906: 41-44). These records show that there were people who were not subsumed under the government polity in this region, and that they maintained their autonomy in the seventeenth century.

About a century later, one of such ‘folk’ groups appears in a Dutch record as, more or less, the subjects of the Siak kingdom (T. Barnard 1998: 91-93). In 1763, VOC officials at a post on Gontong Island at the mouth of the Siak River attempted to construct fences to protect the post from hostile forces, and they asked the king of Siak at that time, Raja Alam, to dispatch labourers to assist in cutting wood and constructing fences. Soon after the request, a group of the ‘king’s folk’ arrived and helped with the construction. After a certain period of labour, however, the ‘king’s folk’ refused to work any further despite the officials assuring them of payment for their work. Raja Alam sent his son to negotiate with the intransigent labourers (see T. Barnard 1998: 92-93). This event indicates that some of the forest and coastal dwellers were under the control of the kingdom to some extent in this era. The government gradually reinforced control over these forest dwellers, and eventually, the Siak rulers declared that they could supply a large amount of timber through their control by the early nineteenth century (T. Barnard 1998: 93).

It is remarkable that most of the forest and coastal dwellers were not completely subsumed under state control even after the state declared it. They maintained their position and identity as non-‘Malayu’ and avoided strong state control even after the nineteenth century. This is because their labour in the forest and its products were still important to the state in maintaining its commercial and political power. For the government the existence of *orang asli* living in peripheral areas was necessary as they were the suppliers of forest products to the state. As a result, they were not absorbed into the state. Rather, they enjoyed their autonomy and traditional ways of life in the forest, and they maintained their identity as distinct from ‘Malayu’. Their position was transformed into ethnicity in the manner of state control in the following period.

Tribespeople in the state formation

Benjamin (2002: 8) explains the formulation of the tribespeople in the Malay world by employing the typological schema of ‘tribespeople–peasant–ruler’ in the state. Rulers are the people such as priests, tax collectors, soldiers and kings, and

peasants are ‘those who allow their lives to be controlled by agencies of the state, which they provision in exchange for a little reflected glory but no counter-control’ (2002: 9).⁷ On the other hand, tribespeople are those who ‘stand apart from the state and its rulers, holding themselves culturally aloof’ in a fashion where they accept the state system only to some extent (Benjamin 2002: 9, 15-16). This applies to the situation of tribespeople living in the coastal area of eastern Sumatra. The rulers and peasants are ‘Malayu’ people. On the other hand, the people who were not always subjugated to the state can be seen as the non-‘Malayu’, and this non-‘Malayu’ became the category of tribespeople or *orang asli*. In this meaning, ‘*orang asli*’ and ‘Malayu’ or ‘*orang Melayu*’ are antonyms in the way the various group classifications developed.

On the other hand, Scott (2009) discusses the ethnogenesis of diverse tribespeople of mainland Southeast Asia by focusing on the political and economic relationship between the people and the state as well as the specific geographic setting. According to him, the communities of tribespeople, who live in the hilly areas with mosaic-like distributions, were formed by those who rejected state control or fled from the state that tried to extort labour and taxes from them. In this transaction between the tribespeople and the state, the hilly parts of inland Southeast Asia, called ‘Zomia’, took an essential role for the people as a shelter, which prevented the exertion of the power of the state that dominated valleys and coastal areas. While Scott’s argument focuses on mainland Southeast Asia, this seems to apply to the formation of the tribespeople on the eastern coast of Sumatra as well. In the development of the state polity, the people avoided state intervention in their lives, and their position as tribespeople or *orang asli* was formed. The numerous isles, inlets and channels covered by mangrove forests in this region could be a shelter. In this coastal forest, they tried to maintain their distance from state control, practising the less-integrated semi-nomadic ways of life in which the state hardly intervened. Their mobility, segmentation, and distance from the political centre were sustained by their low-population density in this region (cf. Trocki 1997: 87); the complex geography of the low and marshy lands penetrated by numerous channels, rivers and

⁷ The Malay world is the term used to indicate the region where the kingdoms of the Malays existed, i.e. the coasts of Borneo, the east coast of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula (Benjamin 2002: 7).

their tributaries; and the cultivation of sago palm as the staple food, which does not need intensive collective labour (T. Barnard 2003: 11-26).

However, there would also be a certain difference between the situation of the tribespeople in the mainland and coastal areas, as the political and geographic settings were different. Paddy cultivation in the valley areas sustained the mainland state, and its power mainly focused on organising populations and labours, or 'manpower'. Therefore, the state tried to strengthen its power and wealth through raids and taking slaves (Anderson 1990; Colombijn 2003a: 448-499), and people fled to the hilly areas that the state hardly exerted its power (Scott 2009). On the other hand, the maritime state in eastern Sumatra, which is generally unsuitable for paddy cultivation, was not only interested in 'manpower' but also in commodities that could be harvested in the forest. Although the state led slavery and piracy raids in coastal areas and exerted their power to the coastal areas to a certain extent, it did not try to absorb peripheral populations into the political and agricultural centres, as mentioned above. Rather, it tried to control the population by leaving them in the forest areas and maintaining trading communications (T. Barnard 2014). In this schema, while the peripheral populations were embedded in hierarchic and regional systems, they maintained some autonomy in the form of being legitimated by the state in the nineteenth century. Andaya summarises their situation as 'Their ethnicization was [...] a deliberate effort to preserve a way of life that guaranteed their advantage and eventual survival from the intrusions of their numerically dominant Malayu neighbours' (2008: 17).

Currently, many *orang asli* living upstream in east and south Sumatra, such as the Sakai, Bonai and Talang Mamak in present-day Riau and the Orang Rimba or the Suku Anak Dalam (or Kubu) in present-day Jambi, are thought to be derived from the Pagaruyung kingdom in western Sumatra. They have oral histories that imply their historical connections with the Pagaruyung kingdom and are more or less characterised by Minangkabau culture and the matrilineal descent system (Isjoni 2002; Porath 2003; Sandbukt 1984). Yet, with regard to the Akit, Utan and Rawa in the coastal areas, there is no evidence implying their direct connection with the Minangkabau, and they have had little communication with upstream *orang asli* groups like the Sakai. Rather, they would have relations with Orang Asli groups in

the Malay Peninsula and Orang Laut groups generally in the Riau-Lingga Archipelago.

Formation of the ethnic category under the Siak kingdom and Dutch colonial government

The polity of the kingdom

Raja Kecil fled to Siak and established the Siak kingdom in 1723. Then, during the eighteenth century, the kingdom developed around the port of Siak Sri Inderapra and gained control over communities and ports not only in the Malacca Strait but also in the South China Sea by means of the charisma of its rulers, control over the commerce between ports, formation of kinship alliances between powerful communities and alliances with the VOC, and carrying out attacks and raids against hostile groups. By the end of the eighteenth century, this kingdom reached the peak of its growth (T. Barnard 2001:339-340, 2003: 116-123; Kathirithamby-Wells 1997: 230-232). However, the Anglo-Dutch treaty of 1824 allowed the Dutch to exert their influences on the Siak kingdom. In 1858, the Netherlands East Indies government and Sultan Ismail signed a treaty in which the kingdom was subsumed under the rule of the Dutch colonial government (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 270-271). Then, a series of treaties were signed during the late nineteenth century whereby the rights of taxation and some territories were handed over to the Dutch colonial government. In this process, the kingdom ceded Bengkalis Island, on which the Dutch government established its capital in 1875 to control the eastern coast of Sumatra (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 308).⁸ The Dutch government indirectly controlled the other areas through the Siak government. According to the treaties, the rights of taxation, such as import and export duties and passenger tax, were transferred from the kingdom to the government. This system of control continued until 1942, when the Japanese occupied the archipelago.

⁸ Bengkalis was the capital of Eastern Coast Province between 1875 and 1887. Then, it was moved to Deli in North Sumatra, present-day Medan.

The early polity of the Siak kingdom was characterised by the '*kacu*-ness' of its population (T. Barnard 2003). As I mentioned in the Introduction, '*kacu*' means 'mixed' or 'not pure' in Malay (T. Barnard 2003: 1). First, this implies the co-existence of the Malays and Minangkabau in the kingdom. After the sixteenth century, an increasing number of Minangkabau migrants flowed into the eastern lowlands from the western highlands and the Pagaruyung kingdom. This immigration was characterised by the pursuit of new trade-economic opportunities that connected the western highlands with the Malacca Strait.⁹ They formed their settlements upstream on the Indragiri and Kampar Rivers, and traded gold, pepper, forest products such as camphor, bezoar and benzoin, and then tin (Andaya 2008: 88-91; T. Barnard 2003: 12-18; Kathirithamby-Wells 1997). Raja Kecik is supposed to have been one of these migrants, and the migrants strongly supported the establishment of the kingdom. The people of Minangkabau descent formed the elite section of the kingdom, and they intermarried with indigenous Malays in the eastern lowlands. In this situation, for the Johor-Melaka Malays, who were seen as the true holders of the throne of the Malay state and as 'pure' Malay population, the Siak kingdom was '*kacu*'. The elites of the Siak kingdom also recognised this. However, in the process of the state formation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Minangkabau and the Malays constructed a combined identity as the 'Siak Malays' (Andaya 2008: 68-75; T. Barnard 2001: 339-340). Second, '*kacu*' implies the actual diversity of the ways of life in this region. This area has a variety of environments that include hinterland hills and vast forests, large rivers and their labyrinthine tributaries, long channels, tidal mangrove swamps, and numerous islands and inlets. Such a complex geography sustained the diverse ways of life and the mobility of the population including the Minangkabau, the Malays and other forest and coastal dwellers (T. Barnard 2003: 2-3). The Siak kingdom had to establish a state system to integrate and control such diverse populations and geographic environments.

Based on this '*kacu*' population, the kingdom established a hierarchic structure of the polity between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. According to Hijmans van Anrooij (1885: 311-353), the population was divided into two categories under

⁹ The words for the pursuit of the new economic opportunities on the river and sea coasts were '*merantau*', and for the migrants '*perantau*'. '*Rantau*' means 'reaches of the river' or 'shore-line' (Andaya 2008: 89-90; see also, T. Barnard 2003: 13-15, Kathirithamby-Wells 1987: 40)

the sultan, i.e. sultan's subjects and the *empat suku*. The *empat suku* (or four clans) were the people of Minangkabau descent and the elites of the kingdom. Their headmen or *datuk* were regarded as contributors to the state establishment and enjoyed a position at par with that of the sultan. They controlled their subjects, most of whom had their roots in western Sumatra. With almost complete economic and political autonomy, they were obliged to support the military affairs of the kingdom. The remainder of the population was under the sultan's rule and was divided into three classes: i.e. *anak raja*, *hamba raja* and *rakyat raja*. The *anak raja* (king's children) were literally the sultan's kinsfolk. Although they possessed high titles and constituted the noble class in the kingdom, their economic and political power was not substantial. The *hamba raja* (the king's subjects) were the ordinary citizens of the state. They were the Muslim Malays who were loyal to the sultan. While they had various rights in terms of land possession and fishing, they were obliged to pay taxes and be under the sultan's control.

The third class, the *rakyat raja* (or king's folk), was the lowest class in the state, and they kept their traditional headman, or *batin*. This category was also subdivided into two classes, i.e. *rakyat tantera* and *rakyat banang*.¹⁰ The *rakyat tantera* were, according to Hijmans van Anrooij, 'nominal' Muslims who had converted to Islam a short time ago and included the *Orang Talang* (the present-day Petalangan) living in the forest of Pelalawan region, the *Rakyat Laut* going back and forth along the coasts (the Orang Laut), the subjects of the four *batin* in Bengkalis Island (they are regarded as the ordinary Malays today), and so forth. The *rakyat banang* were non-Muslims; they were the Sakai, Akit, Utan and Rawa. The *rakyat tantera* were Muslims, so they were recognised as possessing the communal forest or *utan tanah*. However, because *rakyat banang* were not Muslims, Islamic law considered the forests they inhabited as the sultan's possession.

Hijmans van Anrooij (1885: 324, 337) suggests that the boundaries between the *hamba raja* and the *rakyat raja* and those between the *rakyat tantera* and the *rakyat banang* were based on the degree of their belief in Islam. However, in the Siak kingdom, while religion was a part of the polity, it was not one of its foundations (T.

¹⁰ Hijmans van Anrooij (1885) does not mention the translations of these categories, and I could not confirm the meanings of '*tantera*' and '*banang*' in this usage.

Barnard 2001: 333, Colombijn 2003a: 510-511). In addition, given the fact that the highest class, the *empat suku*, obtained their privileges from their contributions to the state establishment, their contributions to the state seem to have been much more important than their actual religion. Thus, these hierarchic classifications were based on the communities' loyalty and contribution – that is, the degree of subordination – to the state.

While the vertical boundaries reflected the degree of subordination to the state, the horizontal categories were established based on the region where the people lived. The kingdom legitimated local headmen of the communities as formal headmen in the polity and controlled the population through them. The *Bab Al-Qawa'id*, the Siak government published in 1903, addressed the headmen of each region in the kingdom (see Junus 2002: 69-76). The kingdom legitimated around two hundred headmen. The titles of the headmen were various such as *datuk*, *penghulu*, and *tua-tua*. These titles were addressed in sets including a name of a place and the name of a community. The subjects to each headman were referred to as the headman's '*anak buah*' which means nephew and niece or, more broadly, collateral descendants, in Malay (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 288). In the net of vertical and horizontal boundaries that was created by the state, a part of the people, who lived in peripheral inland and coastal forests, gradually became marginalised from the people subordinated to the state during the two centuries of the Siak kingdom and the Dutch colonial government.¹¹

Although Hijmans van Anrooij describes the position of the *rakyat raja*, especially the *rakyat banang*, as marginalised and discriminated in the state hierarchy, they were not marginalised or discriminated in a simple and fixed fashion. First, while the social structure was a hierarchic one, the boundaries of each class were vague and fluid; people could move to different categories through conversion and marriage. Indeed, a part of the Utan living in Tebing Tinggi and Rangsang Islands converted to Islam and obtained the status of the *rakyat tantera* before the end of the nineteenth century (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 355). In the same way, the subjects of the four *batin* in Bengkalis Island, who had been seen as *hamba raja* in

¹¹ J.S.G. Gramberg (1864: 503-504), a Dutch official, presented the poverty of the Utan living around Bengkalis Island in term of their clothes and houses in his voyage diary in the mid-nineteenth century. Their marginalisation in relation to the Malays was already clear in this period.

the Siak kingdom, have called themselves and been seen as ordinary Malays or *hamba raja*, at latest, before the independence of Indonesia. Second, *rakyat raja* were essential to the rulers' authority in the state. The state and the various populations had much respect for the *rakyat raja* owing to their supernatural power – they were believed to have strong supernatural powers or magic (*ilmu*). The rulers of the Siak kingdom tried to absorb their supernatural powers through trade relations and marriage and to utilise it as a part of their charismatic authority, or *daulat* (Andaya 2008: 216; T. Barnard 2003: 27-29; see also Chapter 5). Finally, although the Islamic law did not recognise the land right of the non-Muslims, i.e. *rakyat banang*, the right seem to have been recognised to some extent at local level. Indeed, for example, when the Javanese migrated into the area in which the Utan lived, they had to ask the Utan headman for permission and to make a contribution living in the area (see also Chapter 3). This means that the land rights must have been respected at the local level to some extent, because *rakyat banang* were the indigenous people, or *orang asli*, who were thought to have lived in the region before the state formed. On the other hand, although the *empat suku* were the elites of the state, they did not possess the communal forests because they were not indigenous to this region but immigrants from western Sumatra (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 317).

Suku as a regional political unit

In the Siak polity, the concept of '*suku*' played on an essential role. At present, this term implies for city dwellers 'tribe' or 'inferior culture' in rural areas (Benjamin 2002: 16-17; Wilkinson 1957: 1129-1130). However, the term '*suku*' in the Siak kingdom had an obviously different implication from the present negative one. In fact, '*suku*' was used with the meaning of 'clan' or 'community' in the *Bab Al-Qawa'id*¹² and the elite of the kingdom, i.e. the *empat suku*, was also referred to as

¹² Together with '*suku*', a term '*hinduk*' is also frequently used for the meaning of 'clan' or 'community' in the *Bab Al-Qawa'id*. Although the difference between '*hinduk*' and '*suku*' is unclear, these terms would have been differentiated based on the subdivision (*negeri propinsi*) of the kingdom (see Junus 2002: 71). Tenas Effendy implies that '*hinduk*' indicates a subdivision group under '*suku*' (Effendy 2002: 364). Benjamin, translator of Effendy's article, notes that while the meaning of '*hinduk*' here is unclear, '*hinduk*' means 'mother' in a Malay dialect (Effendy 2002: 381).

'*suku*'. It was used for indicating local communities neutrally as a political unit under a headman such as *batin*, *penghulu* and *datuk*. Even at present, '*suku*' is often used without any negative connotations by not only *orang asli* but also the Malays and the Javanese, at least in the rural areas in the eastern coasts.

The term '*suku*' would have been introduced to the Siak polity by the Minangkabau elites from western Sumatra.¹³ According to Joel Kahn (1993: 155-160), the Minangkabau term '*suku*' can be translated as 'clan', which is characterised as being matrilineal. In the Minangkabau political system in the colonial era, each *suku* had a collective name and a single headman, or *panghulu*, who controlled the selling and buying of paddy fields. The fields were regarded not only as the individual property of a female, but also common property of the *suku* members as a whole. Although the matrilineal character of the clan disappeared¹⁴ and paddy fields were very limited in eastern Sumatra, the Siak polity would have adopted the term '*suku*' with a similar idea. The kingdom established people's category based on the (imagined) kin group as *suku* that was composed of *anak buah* of a headman, gave collective names to each *suku*, and legitimated the control of their territory. By doing so, they controlled the population and obtained the commodities harvested in the forest. On the other hand, the local headmen were granted the right to control their communal forest as a territory. As a result, people, who lived in peripheral forests and coasts, were integrated and differentiated as the regional political unit of the *suku*.

In this period, the kingdom was interested in not only controlling 'manpower' but also 'territory' as a result of the influences of the VOC and the Dutch colonial government (cf. Duncan 2004a: 6-7). In accordance with this shift in interests, the kingdom would have needed to control not only the ports and settlements, where the kingdom could control the population and obtain regular taxes, but also peripheral coasts and forests where people lived. The kingdom tried to control such peripheral

¹³ Edwin Loeb (1934: 29) asserts that the term '*suku*' originated from the Minangkabau pointing out that '*suku*' in Malay had different meanings as 'leg' or 'fourth part'. On the other hand, the Orang Laut in the Riau-Lingga Archipelago also use the term '*suku*' to denote sub-division of groups. However, this term indicated mainly territorial and hierarchic occupational groups in the Riau kingdom, not clan (Chou 2010: 20-25).

¹⁴ While the Minangkabau have a matrilineal descent system, the Malays in eastern Sumatra had patrilineal and bilateral or non-lineal descent systems. Therefore, on their intermarriage, there was an *adat* in which the first, third, fifth (and so on) children in a household belonged to the mother's descent, and the second, fourth and sixth ones belonged to the father's descent (Hijmans van Anrooij: 1885: 317).

areas as its territory by legitimating the people living in the areas and maintaining the boundaries with other kingdoms (Porath 2003: 15). In this process, it was essential for the state to array the population on the map and characterise them by giving them collective names for controlling the population easily and effectively (Scott 1998: 1-83). *Orang asli* were also given the collective names and headmanship based on the region that they inhabited.

In designating boundaries on the criterion of region in this manner, the Siak kingdom ignored the people's social and cultural boundaries, communication, heterogeneity or homogeneity. As a result, this horizontal boundary among the people was much more flexible and vague than the vertical ones. This was especially the case among the people living in the coastal islands, who frequently moved from place to place via the sea, channels and rivers. Thus, not surprisingly, some Dutch observers, who would have been interested in the social and cultural characteristics of the tribespeople, emphasised their lack of understanding of the differences between the Akit, Utan, Rawa and others. For example, Hijimans van Anlooij pointed out the vague distinction and significance of mobility between the Utan and the Rawa as follows:

There seems to be no essential distinction between them. At least, the Rawa are the Utan living along and near to Rawa River. They are going back and forth, sometimes from mainland to the islands of opposite shore, and then to mainland again. (1885: 352 [my translation])

J. Tideman (1935: 14) also addressed his supposition that the Rawa might be another name for the Akit. Also, he states that the Utan in the Siak kingdom were the same people as the Mantang (*Orang Mantang*) living in present-day Kampar regency, who are regarded as a regional group of the Orang Laut (Chou 2010: 6-7).

In addition, Hans Kähler (1960), a German ethno-linguist, refers to the heterogeneity of the people called the Utan. Kähler visited the two Utan villages of 'Tandjung Səsap' and 'Djanggut' in Tebing Tinggi Island in 1939. He sketched the customs, such as marriage, funeral, pregnancy and circumcision, of each village in a few pages. The important fact is that he divided the descriptions of the two villages into different sections. Although he did not explain it, this would imply that he recognised a certain cultural diversity between them. Furthermore, their vocabularies

were different to some extent. The kingdom would have attempted to reduce such segmentation and heterogeneity among similar and mobile populations into the category of the Utan in order to govern them more easily and effectively by the hierarchic and regional political structure.

In short, the term '*suku*', which is used in the present ethnonym '*Suku Asli*', was formulated in the Siak kingdom. Although this term is used to imply 'backward' and 'primitive' tribespeople, it was a regional political unit based on kinship or a class of the state hierarchy rather than ethnicity in a primordial fashion. The unit of '*suku*' was not always concerned with the cultural and social boundaries. '*Suku Utan*', '*Suku Akit*' and '*Suku Rawa*' are the collective names imposed by the state for regional distinction of the units, despite the fact that their social and cultural boundaries were vague and fluid.

The process and degree of subordination to the state

The implications of the state's imposition of collective names on the tribespeople in the Dutch colonial records correspond with the history of *orang asli* in this region. The Akit living in Rupert Island recognise that a sultan of the kingdom gave them the collective names 'Akit' and 'Utan' and their territories. They have relatively a detailed oral history about their immigration to Rupert, subordination to the kingdom, and receipt of their collective names.¹⁵

According to the history, their ancestors came to this island somewhere 'from the east (*dari timur*)'.¹⁶ They frequently moved from place to place by canoes, and eventually entered the territory of the Siak kingdom. However, animals such as the

¹⁵ Their history was recorded in two reports. One is the 'Proyek Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Masyarakat Terasing Hutan Panjang (Development and Welfare Project of Suku Terasing in Hutan Panjang)' edited by the Department of Social Affairs in Pekanbaru (Kantor Wilayah Departemen Sosial Propinsi Riau 1979). Another is 'Mengenang Sejarah Perjuangan Batin Pantjang di Kampung Titi Akar (Memoir of the History of Batin Patjang's Struggle)' edited by the village office of Titi Akar at the beginning of the 1980s (Kantor Desa Titi Akar n.d.). Both reports were based on the interview with Akit elders at that time. The given description is based on these two reports and my interviews during my fieldwork in Titi Akar and Hutan Panjang, Rupert, between 2006 and 2007.

¹⁶ In different versions, they came to the mouth of the Siak River from the region of Mandau, which is upstream of Siak River. This had been the region of the Sakai. Indeed, there was a region in upstream Siak where people called the Akit (Akit Penguling) lived (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 302-303, 350-351). However, the relationship between them is unknown.

tigers and elephants in this place threatened them, so they moved to Padang Island and lived there for a while. However, because they were still threatened by wild animals, they moved again. They found a safe place on Rupert Island, which, however, the Orang Rempang already inhabited.¹⁷ The Orang Rempang agreed to concede the land in exchange for gifts of silver and gold. As the ancestors did not have the gifts, they went to Bukit Batu, and asked the Datuk Laksamana, a Malay title of the Siak kingdom, to support them. He accepted their request but asked them to support the construction of a court (*istana*) at Bukit Batu in exchange for the gifts. He divided them into three groups for labour as follows:

- (1) The group that cut down the trees in the forest: *Suku Utan* (the group of the forest).
- (2) The group that made rafts using the timbers and transported them to the destination: *Suku Akit* (the group of the raft).
- (3) The group that constructed the paths and cleaned the rivers for timber transportation (*mehatas*): *Suku Hatas* (the group of the *hatas*).

After completing the labour, they received the gifts from Datuk Laksamana and obtained the land in Rupert. The sultan of the kingdom also recognised their right to live in the place. *Suku Akit* obtained the area ‘upstream’ of the Morong Channel, which penetrates Rupert Island; namely, the present-day village of Hutan Panjang. *Suku Hatas* took the area ‘downstream’; namely, the present-day Titi Akar. These groups have been living in Rupert and both groups identify themselves as the Akit today.¹⁸ On the other hand, *Suku Utan* received the place of Tanjung Padang in Padang Island, or, in a different version, Bantan, the northern coast of Bengkalis Island. The state legitimated their headmen, *batin*, and they have since lived in respective territories.

This event occurred at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁹ It is uncertain to what extent this oral history reflects the historical facts, because it does not explain

¹⁷ Orang Rempang is a group of the Orang Laut (Chou 2004: 128). According to the oral history, after giving the land to the Akit, they moved to the Riau-Lingga archipelago.

¹⁸ Although it is very usual that the population of the both villages identify themselves as ‘*Orang/Suku Akit*’, the people in Titi Akar may refer to themselves as ‘*Orang/Suku Akit-Hatas*’.

¹⁹ According to the report of Titi Akar, the first *batin* in Titi Akar took the role between 1816 and 1883, though these years are obviously estimated ones. In addition, the role of Datuk Laksamana in Bukit Batu was established in the latter half of the eighteenth century by Raja Ismail of the Siak

the origin of the Utan living in distant places such as Mendol Island. In addition, there is a different view of the origin of the name 'Akit' based on one of their customs.²⁰ Rather, it seems to be more probable that there were similar but distinctive *orang asli* groups around this region. When the state exerted its control to these people, the state re-allied these populations giving them either the name of 'Akit' or 'Utan', which would have been ambiguously used to indicate coastal or forest dwellers. This event would have happened as a part of the process of state control. Yet, it is certain that the Akit in Rupert and a part of the Utan or Suku Asli at present in Bengkalis recognise that they obtained their position as '*suku*' in the kingdom, their territory and collective names through this event.

The peoples of different regions would have also been subsumed under the control of kingdom in more or less similar ways. Nevertheless, the degree of subordination to the kingdom varied. For example, the people who lived in the inland forest of Pelalawan and conducted the slash-and-burn cultivation of dry rice were subsumed under the polity accepting the name '*Orang Talang*'. According to Tenas Effendy (2002: 364), '*talang*' refers to 'middle man' or 'trader'. They had somewhat closer relations with the kingdom than other forest and coastal dwellers. They engaged in *serahan* trades, which connected the inland forests and the sea-coastal areas through bartering forest products and salt, iron or cloths; they regularly paid taxes for rice and beeswax to the state; and they converted to Islam relatively earlier (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 337-342), and they are the present-day Petalangan. In addition, the people on the upstream Mandau River, a tributary of the Siak River, were called '*Orang Sakai*'. '*Sakai*' implied 'slavery and debt bondage' in the past, and forest dwellers in different regions in the Malay World are often referred to by

kingdom (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 332-333). Therefore, this event would have occurred around 1800.

²⁰ Some colonial records state a different view of the origin of their name. The name, *Orang Akit*, was derived from their custom of building a house on a raft and living in it (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 303; Loeb 1935: 294), and Max Moszcowski took a photograph of such house at the beginning of twentieth century at the midstream of the Siak River (Moszcowski 1909: 36). According to old Akit informants in Rupert, they have never seen such houses on rafts. Moszcowski's photograph was probably of the people called as '*Orang Akit Penguling*' (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 303) who lived in mid-stream Siak. While Hijmans van Anrooij (1885: 358-359) states that the '*Orang Akit Penguling*' also immigrated to Rupert together with the '*Orang Akit*' and '*Orang Hatas*' mentioned above, I did not find people who identified themselves as the '*Orang Akit Penguling*' in Rupert during my fieldwork.

the same collective name (Porath 2000: 177). They were important to the kingdom in terms of military affairs because they lived sparsely in the boundary area between the Siak and Rokan kingdoms. They also engaged in *serahan* trade. However, the kingdom controlled them less; they rarely paid the taxes that they were obligated to pay in the form of forest products (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 347-350; Porath 2003: 1-25).

The degree of subordination to the kingdom of the Utan, Akit and Rawa was almost the same as that of the Sakai. They were obliged to supply timber to the sultan (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 359). However, the rule was reinforced regularly. At present, the Akit and Suku Asli do not remember any regular taxation or corvée imposed by the state except for the corvée mentioned above and occasional tributary communication with the sultan (see Chapter 4). While they lived near to the seacoasts where the state could access them relatively easily, the state control was limited as their settlements were scattered along the coasts across the labyrinthine rivers covered by thick mangrove forests. The state was interested only in controlling the lands as territory for timber in this region rather than the population. Therefore, after the middle of the nineteenth century, the Siak kingdom established a system to obtain resources and taxes from the Chinese and European enterprises, not the *orang asli*, as mentioned below in this section.

Although this seems to be an unreliable census, Hijmans van Anrooij (1885: 358-360) gives the numbers of the *orang asli* population in the late nineteenth century as: the Sakai – 4000 to 5000 people; the Akit in Rupert – around 200 people; the Rawa around Rawa River – from 20 to 130 people; and the Utan – about 200 people in Padang Island, 300 people in Merbau, and 600 to 700 people in both Tebing Tinggi and Rangsang Islands.

The *orang asli* communities did not always accept the collective names such as ‘Suku Utan’, ‘Suku Akit’ and ‘Suku Sakai’, because the state-designated categories were rather ‘exonyms’ that outsiders used. On the one hand, the Akit accepted the name ‘Orang Akit’ relatively earlier. They have used the collective name without resistance together with ‘*orang asli*’ to date. On the other hand, the Sakai identified themselves as ‘*orang batin* (people under the *batin* headman)’ in the past, and they prefer to call themselves *orang asli* even today. Porath (2002: 771, 2003: 3-4)

identifies them as ‘upstream Mandau people’ when he mentions them before the 1960s, because they accepted the collective name ‘*Orang Sakai*’ only after this period. In a similar way, the people called ‘*Orang Utan*’ in Bengkalis Island resisted being called this, because this expression was directly connected not only with forests but also with apes. They called themselves *orang asli*, or even ‘*Orang Akit*’ when they needed to use their collective names, while accepting the status or class of ‘*Suku Hutan*’ in the state polity (see also Chapters 2 and 4).

The early records of the Utan and involvement in trade

Although *orang asli* political communication with the state was rather limited, their life was far from isolated. Their connection with the state in the economic sphere was continuously maintained, as they engaged in trade. In the mid-nineteenth century, some European writings mentioned a group called the Utan as the suppliers of sago and forest products. *Singapore Chronicles* issued on 15th Feb 1827 mentions the Utan living in ‘Appong’, present-day Mendol Island (see Map 1), as follows:

At Appong, the sago is made by Orang Utan, or people of the woods, who speak a jargon of Malayan, are not Mohammedans, and eat hogs, deer, etc. with which their island abounds; and the maritime Malays, who visit them for sago, are obliged to be always upon their guard, and not unfrequently wait two months for the cargo [...] ; if they take money to purchase, they get it quicker, but require additional caution in making advances. There are said to be about 350 souls, and that the produce might be put down 3,000 piculs a year. The most of these people are dependants of Siak and Campar; the chiefs of former place exercising a system of extortion and rapine, enough to induce any other class of people less accustomed, to desert the place. The cultivators in other places are Malays, and much superior, though their exports are severally less; and trafficking with them is not so dangerous or uncertain. (Singapore Chronicle 1827)

As far as I know, this is the first account that mentions the Utan living on the islands of the estuary areas of Siak and Kampar Rivers. Mendol Island is within the area that the Utan have historically moved around, and some present-day Suku Asli in Bengkalis Island have relatives and friends on this island. In addition, J. H. Moor

describes briefly the population living between Rangsang and Bengkalis Islands, who were also engaging in the cultivation of sago, as follows:

[These islands are] partly inhabited by Malays but chiefly by another race not yet converted to mahomedanism. Rantao (present-day Rangsang), a low marshy island, produces by far the larger quantity of raw sago which is imported into Malacca and Singapore, for the manufacture of pearl sago, and has become, within the last few years, so large and important an article of export to Europe. The unconverted race now mentioned, and not the Malays, are the sole cultivators and preparers of the sago. (1837: 98)

In this article, the collective name of the ‘the unconverted race’ is not mentioned, but it must be related to the Utan. In addition to sago, they engaged in the trade of forest products such as wild boar meat and the ivory of elephants and rhinoceroses (T. Barnard 2003: 26).

Their trades of various forest products with outsiders gradually converged in harvesting timber. In 1824, the Johor kingdom ceded Singapore to Britain, and Singapore rapidly became a prosperous centre trading within the whole of Asia. The dramatic rise in the population led to increase in demand for timber for the construction of buildings, so the eastern coasts of Sumatra became an important supply centre. In this situation, the Siak kingdom granted the rights to harvest timber in its realm to Singapore at the beginning of the 1850s (T. Barnard 1998: 94-95). This system is the *panglong* system.²¹ In this system, about one and a half million hectares of forestlands along the eastern coast were designated as ‘*panglong* area (*panglong-gebied*)’ and the Siak government relegated the harvesting and export of timber to European and Chinese companies in Singapore and Bengkalis town (Tideman 1935: 3). In exchange for this, the government obtained taxes for each labourer sent by the companies. Almost all of the labourers were Chinese men who were employed from southern China (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 309; Tideman 1935: 18-20). As a result, many Chinese timber mills and labourers moved to the forest areas in this region.²²

²¹ ‘*Panglong*’ means ‘timber’ in Hakka language (Tideman 1935: 19; T. Barnard 1998: 94) or ‘enterprise’ (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 307). This term is still used in Suku Asli-Chinese society in Bengkalis, but it mainly means ‘charcoal hut’ that produces charcoal for export.

²² The immigration of the ethnic Chinese was so large scale that Siak government tried to regulate the number of immigrants at the end of nineteenth century (Tideman 1935: 19-20).

The forests of the Utan, Akit and Rawa territories were involved in this ‘*panglong* area’, probably because their land rights could be ignored according to the principle that the non-Islamic population could not possess land in the Islamic kingdom. After the Chinese companies penetrated their forests, the Utan, Akit and Rawa were also employed as labourers. In exchange for their labour, they obtained cloth, iron tools, rice and money from the Chinese merchants. The dealings involving timber for construction were gradually reduced in the twentieth century because of the Great Depression from the end of the 1920s (Tideman 1935: 21), the unrest caused by the Japanese incursion into Southeast Asia in the 1940s, and probably a reduction in number of suitable large trees. Therefore, timber trade diminished in the mid-twentieth century.²³ Instead, the importance of trade in charcoal made from mangrove timber and exported to Singapore and Malaysia has increased. Even today, the logging of mangrove timber is the main source of cash income for most of the Utan or Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa (see Chapter 3).

After the introduction of the ‘*panglong* system’, the *orang asli* in the Siak estuary established kinship and close economic and political connections with the ethnic Chinese. Some Chinese men married *orang asli* women, and they are the ancestors of *peranakan* in present-day Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa communities. According to Tideman (1935: 14), one of the *batin* among the Rawa in the 1930s was an ethnic Chinese. The connection between them and the ethnic Chinese has been reinforced for a century, and constructed a specific ethnic identity and category in their society (see Chapter 2).

To sum up, in terms of the state control of the Siak kingdom and the Dutch colonial government, the state related to forest and coastal dwellers through employing them as labourers in the forests and on the coasts, and subsumed them under state control. The state gave them collective names, territories and headmanships. Therefore, ‘the Sakai’, ‘the Akit’, ‘the Rawa’ and ‘the Utan’ are ethnic categories given by the Siak kingdom while ignoring their actual indigenous identification and practices. However, the categorisation of populations in this period focused more on forming the state polity encompassing the ‘*kacu*’ populations as a

²³ The influences of the World Depression and the Japanese incursion would be so disruptive even in this peripheral area. Some old Suku Asli informants remember that their standard of life dropped disastrously before and just after the Japanese occupation.

whole rather than on controlling the specific populations in peripheral and marginal locations. While the state succeeded in making the forest and coastal dwellers its subjects, the state did not directly intervene in their lives except for the purpose of categorisation, and almost ignored them. Therefore, although the people accepted the territory and headmanship that were beneficial for them, they did not always accept the collective names and identities. They maintained their autonomy or segmentation in relation to the state and retained their marginalised position while accepting the Chinese incomers through marriages. In this way, the relationship between the tribespeople and the state, characterised by the economic connection and political separation, was maintained until the twentieth century, though their relationship was much reinforced under the rule of the Siak kingdom.

This relationship changed after Indonesia gained independence. The group and headmanship categories changed from regional political units or classes to becoming part and parcel of the objectives of development programmes in the Indonesian government policies. As a result, the government began to intervene directly in their life.

As the subjects of development policies

Masyarakat terasing or 'isolated society'

After a short period of Japanese occupation (1942-1945) and the Indonesian War of Independence (1945-1949), the archipelago declared independence in 1945 as the Republic of Indonesia and achieved it in 1949. Afterwards, Indonesia experienced changes of regimes, i.e. Sukarno's Old Order (1949-1967), Suharto's New Order regime (1967- 1998), and the present post-Suharto regime (1998-). The government of this nation state of vast areas divided by the sea and including diverse populations faced the necessity of integrating the rural populations into 'the Indonesians', so they intervened in their life under the banner of 'development'.

During the Sukarno and Suharto regimes, government policies were characterised by centralised sovereignty, and they tried to control the local

population, territory and resources by claiming the priority of the state and ignoring the rights of the local populations, as I mentioned in the Introduction. During the Sukarno regime, although the government tried to legally recognise the customary rights of rural communities based on the idea of '*adat* community' that was formed during the Dutch colonial era, the government failed to implement the reforms because the bureaucracy was limited in exerting authority in the local areas (Li 2007: 52-53; see also Chapter 5). For example, according to the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960, when customary land rights and national law contradicted each other, it was customary law that had to be amended. The state had the right to regulate and exploit all natural resources (Porath 2000: 182). It is also remarkable that the rise of anti-communism in the late 1960s brought about the reinforcement of control over peripheral areas. There were considerable government interventions in local societies, because the government feared the peripheral areas and their populations might become a hotbed for communism (Duncan 2004a: 8).

During the Suharto regime, the pursuit of centralised sovereignty was strengthened further. President Suharto took office in 1968, and referred to himself as the 'Father of Development' (*Bapak Pembangunan*) (Heryanto 1988: 20-21). This 'development' meant, primarily, the 'modernisation' of the state or rising economic profits and constructing infrastructure. Under his development programmes, many mines, oilfields and industrial companies were established, and many roads, dams, plantations and factories were constructed. The various development schemes were designed primarily to pursue economic profits only for the government and a limited number of people associated with it. When the government claimed to achieve more 'efficient' usage of land, many Indonesians in rural areas did not receive any benefits, and even lost their ancestral lands (Li 2007: 58). The Basic Forestry Law of 1967 was generally interpreted as claiming that all rights over forest areas resided in the state (Henley & Davidson 2007: 11). In addition, this kind of development programme had the purpose of 'civilising' peripheral populations with the aim of limiting the influence of communism rather than raising their standard of living. Porath (2002: 791) cites the following comment made about this regime by a Riau-Malay intellectual: 'the Suharto government wanted the land without its peoples (*Riau tanpa orangnya*)'.

Under these development schemes, the government, mainly the Department of Social Affairs, set up the category of, first, *suku-suku terasing* (isolated tribes) and then, *masyarakat terasing* (isolated communities) (Persoon 1998: 287-288). The purpose of setting up this category was to classify those who lived in peripheral areas and were regarded as ‘backward’ and ‘primitive’ and to integrate them with ‘rural Indonesians’ (Duncan 2004a:1-5; Persoon 1998: 287-289; Porath 2010: 275). At first, not many people who were living in extreme poverty were regarded as *suku-suku terasing*. In particular, the Kubu or the Orang Rimba in Jambi and the Mentawaians in the islands of western Sumatra were referred to as such people. The government implemented some projects to improve their life, though the impact was limited (Persoon 1998: 287). Then, the number dramatically increased between the mid-1960s and 1980, in which while it was estimated at thirty thousand people in the mid-1960s, it increased to 1.7 million in 1980 (Persoon 1998: 288). In accordance with the increase, the category was changed to *masyarakat terasing* in the mid-1970s. These peoples were the main targets of the development programmes that the Department of Social Affairs implemented.

It is remarkable that the categorisation of *suku-suku terasing* or *masyarakat terasing* did not have strict criteria and was a product of the government imagination (Persoon 1998: 289). Probably, the category was first established by the central government in a top-down way based on the image of the people in ‘primitive’ and ‘backward’ situations. Then the province and regency governments reported to Jakarta some groups in their regions as *suku-suku terasing*. In this process, the local governments seem to identify the groups based on the category of the local histories. They defined the people whom they had regarded as tribespeople during the pre-colonial and colonial eras as *suku-suku terasing*, and ignored the peoples’ actual economic situation, ways of life, self-identification and their changes. The dramatic increase in number of *masyarakat terasing* in the period seemed to have resulted from this process. In other words, the pre-colonial and colonial categorisation of the people who were not subjugated to the state was inherited and consolidated by the categorisation of *suku-suku terasing* or *masyarakat terasing* in post-independence Indonesia.

The local government of Riau designated the locals as *suku-suku terasing* or *masyarakat terasing* obviously under the influence of the classification formed in the colonial era, not necessarily considering the people's actual economic situations and socio-cultural boundaries and mobility. According to a report written by Riau government in 2005 (Pemerintah Propinsi Riau 2005), the government recognised six groups as the KAT: the Akit, the Bonai, the Orang Laut, the Utan, the Sakai and the Talang Mamak.²⁴ The Talang Mamak and Bonai lived in the realms of the Indragiri and Rokan kingdoms respectively in situations similar to the tribespeople of the Siak kingdom. On the other hand, the Malays were not included in the list at all, although some of them would have lived in similar economic conditions. As a result, although the *suku* system in the Siak kingdom was abolished, the colonial era hierarchic classification and groups' names have remained as the formal political category in post-colonial Indonesia, thereby transforming the people involved into the subjects of the development projects.

The main concrete development project imposed on the people of *suku-suku terasing* or *masyarakat terasing* was resettlement and the construction of houses (Duncan 2004b: 93-94; Persoon 1998: 290-291). The government brought together the forest dwellers living in sparsely populated areas, moved them to newly constructed settlements near the coasts or roads that were made accessible by the government, and encouraged them to establish a community as rural Indonesians. By doing so, the government could control them easily and effectively, obtain the resources of the forest without any concern for the inhabitants, and prevent the rise of communism. In addition, the government encouraged many Javanese and Balinese, who were regarded as 'civilised' rural populations and lived in high population density areas, to immigrate to the peripheral areas inhabited by *masyarakat terasing*. By doing so, the government could fill the population-devoid areas in the territory and bring 'modernisation' and 'civilisation' to the *masyarakat terasing* through communication between the migrants and the local populations.

In Riau, the resettlement projects targeting *suku terasing* or *masyarakat terasing* were also rolled out. For example, just before independence, oilfields began to be

²⁴ In the government category of *masyarakat terasing* or KAT, the Rawa who are clearly mentioned in past records and live in present Siak regency are always omitted. They would be included in the Akit or Utan. The government often confuse them even today.

established in Mandau region, and the Sakai forests became a major oilfield. To access the oilfield, the Caltex oil company began to construct roads throughout their rainforest. Following the expansion of the oilfields and roads, North Sumatrans (the Bataks), Javanese and West Sumatrans (the Minangkabau) migrated to the area and built settlements along the roads. Many Sakai sold their lands to such migrants, and moved to the settlements near the roads that gave them easy access to various sources of income. The government often constructed such settlements with Islamic mosques where the Sakai could pray together (Porath 2002). In the same way, an oil company made a foray into the forest areas along the Rawa River between the 1980s and 1990s. The government and the company assembled hundreds of people who had lived scattered through the forest and been called the Rawa in the Siak kingdom, and constructed a new administrative village on the sea coast. Yet, in the islands of the Siak estuary including Bengkalis and Rupat Islands, the government did not conduct the resettlement of the Akit and Utan. However, projects for Javanese immigration into these islands have been intermittently implemented since the 1970s (see Chapter 3). In addition, the government occasionally constructed dozens of new houses as small development projects for them near the roads and coasts.

The people who were in the lowest class in the Siak kingdom were transformed into *suku-suku terasing* as the subjects of development programmes in the government quest for control of the land and resources and ‘civilisation’ of the people. The word ‘*suku-suku*’, the plural form of ‘*suku*’, simply shows their position in the state; the word refers to ‘primitive and backward tribes’, rather than its neutral meaning in the Siak kingdom. Although the government category changed to *masyarakat terasing* later, *suku terasing* had been used to indicate ‘primitive’ and ‘backward’ people until now. According to Porath, the government applied the image to the category as an ‘ideological tool’:

... as an ideological tool by which the nation state interacts with tribal peoples, development gives the target group certain definition of who they are *vis-à-vis* the rest of national society, who they should be and how they should achieve it. These definitions are rooted in the modernist’s ideological mirror of primitivism and underline the more explicit developmental dichotomy of progressed *versus* not progressed and rich *versus* poor. (2010: 270)

In short, their categorisation and position were determined in relation to the ‘civilised’ ordinary Indonesians in the process of the state formation after independence, much like the position of *orang asli* in relation with the Malays in the precolonial kingdom. However, the difference was this new political categorisation involved, more or less, the direct intervention in the peoples’ lives. Through such interventions, the government tried to control them in a manner more suited to the agenda of creating the nation state in the modern world.

Post-Suharto era and change

Since the end of the Suharto regime in 1998, the government development policies have changed to ‘decentralisation’. The new legislation and international support have provided opportunities for local communities, including tribespeople, to govern the use of their resources locally, something that was impossible under previous regimes. For instance, between 1998 and 2003, the World Bank backed up this movement by loaning Indonesia funds worth one billion USD for the purpose of restructuring and empowering local communities ‘damaged’ during the New Order (Li 2007b: 230-31). As a result, some tribespeople, such as the Punan, Orang Rimba, Meratus, and Dayak, have been able to access new resources and social services (Erni & Stidsen 2006: 302-3; Wollenberg et al. 2009). The government is making efforts to raise local populations’ living standards and provide education as to how they can achieve their desires and aspirations. This is a dramatic change in the government’s attitude to the tribespeople, compared with the development projects in earlier periods.

Under these political changes, the people, who had experienced exploitation and marginalisation during the older regimes, began to organise local power to claim their right of autonomy, land, and resources. In particular, AMAN is the most influential organisation focusing on matters of indigenous rights. This organisation was established in 1999 mainly by people living in Kalimantan as an alliance of local communities. Then, it rapidly developed over the archipelago, and took the role of serving ‘as an umbrella organization for the member organizations that would

formulate specific programmes to carry out its demands' (Acciaoli 2007: 299). Lobbying for the recognition of local rights in Indonesian state politics, this organisation is at the centre of the movement that tries to change government development schemes, and has begun supporting activities on behalf of local communities including tribespeople. AMAN has provided local communities the chance to seek an increase in their livelihood and establish their new position in the Indonesian state. Supported by AMAN, some local authorities and communities have been able to intervene in the government development programmes, which the government used to plan without consultation to ensure that they receive the benefits (Henley & Davidson 2007: 1-7).

These movements have made remarkable progress in demonstrating the rights of an '*adat* community'. By adopting this concept, many activists and local authorities have tried to identify themselves as an authentic Indonesian rural community, and tried to convince the government to legitimate their rights. '*Adat* community' has linked to the transnational concept of 'indigenous peoples', which has been conceptualised at the international political level. AMAN translated '*adat* community' into 'indigenous peoples' and required the government to deal with the rights of the *adat* communities according to the international guidelines for 'indigenous peoples' (Henley & Davidson 2007: 2-5).

In this movement, the position of tribespeople has also changed. They have been regarded as not only being exploited by the state development projects during the post-independence Indonesia, but also clearly in need of maintaining their 'traditional' way of life and knowledge, or *adat*. Therefore, the activists try to support them and protect their rights as a symbol of the movement. In accordance with the change, the KAT replaced the designation of tribespeople as *masyarakat terasing* in 1999 (Duncan 2004a: 91). '*Terpencil*' in the name of KAT is a synonym of '*terasing*', but it implies political marginalisation rather than geographic isolation. In addition, their 'traditional' way of life and knowledge gained respect (eg. Colombijn 2003b; Effendy 1997, 2002; Li 2001). Accepting to some extent the urgings of this movement, the government began implementing development projects for tribespeople with some respect for traditional practices and beliefs.

In Riau, the position of *orang asli* groups changed in accordance with the rise of Malay ethno-nationalism. Riau province experienced the exploration of the land and resources by Jakarta and the mass immigration of the Javanese and Minangkabau during Suharto regime. After the fall of Suharto, many local authorities and intellectuals of the Riau Malays, which included many local officials, tried to regain the autonomy and self-determination based on Malay values and institutions. In this movement, they facilitated Malay ethno-nationalism by redefining the local cultures and traditions as Malay *adat* (Colombijn 2003b: 343-351). *Orang asli* cultures and traditions were also redefined as a part of Malay culture in this movement. For example, at the end of the Suharto regime, the Petalangan (or, as they were known in the past, the Talang) began claiming their ancestral land rights over the forest, which the government development projects were encroaching upon. Intellectuals in Riau began to be active in their support of this movement, and the Petalangan obtained subsidies and support from the local government and international foundations. In this process, their tradition and culture, which had been seen as different from ‘civilised’ Malays in the colonial era, became recognised as a variation, or even a symbol, of the Riau Malay culture (Effendy 1997, 2002; Masuda 2009). Similarly, the more ‘tribal’ people, especially the Sakai and Talang Mamak, have also been pushed to the fore in the local autonomy movement because they are supposed to have maintained the culture and tradition that modern Malays have lost. The Sakai were honoured for their spiritual and environmental knowledge, and the Talang Mamak were recognised as the maternal kinsmen of the king in the Indragiri kingdom (Colombijn 2003b: 349). The Utan, Akit and Rawa were not included in the movement’s mainstream. This is probably because they are not Muslims. In the rise of Malay ethno-nationalism, Islam is considered essential for regarding Malays as an integrated ethnicity, and Malay intellectuals would not emphasise the significance of non-Islamic *orang asli* such as the Utan, Akit and Rawa. However, the local government is actually recognising their traditions, land rights and autonomy according to the changing political atmosphere.

Although the Sukarno and Suharto regimes wanted to integrate the ‘primitive’ and ‘backward’ tribespeople into the mainstream Indonesian population, successive recent governments have come to regard the tribespeople as people who have

maintained their respect for the regional tradition or culture. The government began to take a somewhat positive view of their autonomy and their social and cultural differences from the mainstream population. In these policies, the government have configured the image of '*adat* communities', and along the line of this image, they have educated tribespeople's desires, aspirations and habits. In this situation, *orang asli* in Riau are beginning to positively demonstrate their position as '*adat* communities' or 'indigenous peoples', and accept the support of the activists and the government.

In the post-Suharto regime, we can see the emergence of 'governmentality' in government development interventions with tribespeople. During the previous regimes, development projects took the form of large-scale exploitation of rural land and resources that ignored benefitting local communities. In addition, the government had tried to transform tribespeople into 'ordinary' rural Indonesians through the resettlement while ignoring their traditional ways of life. These development projects seem to have directly restricted and reformed the behaviour and knowledge of the local population. In other words, the government tried to control tribespeople's 'conduct'. However, since the fall of Suharto, the government has tried to negotiate with the local authorities and activists about how to develop tribespeople and educate them to improve their standard of living. In addition, the government affirms and respects the local autonomy based on *adat* and tries to embed tribespeople in the polity maintaining it. As a result, local communities including tribespeople have positively pursued the improvement of their livelihood and their position in local and state politics. In other words, echoing Foucault's definition of 'governmentality', the government has come to control the 'conduct of conduct' of tribespeople (Li 2007b: 12-13). Therefore, recent development schemes planned by government and NGOs appear to include a 'governmental' ethos that was ignored in the past.

This 'governmentality' does not affirm all kinds of autonomy and rights among locals. The autonomy and rights that the government may permit is only what fits the government image of a local community – that is, an '*adat* community'. In an '*adat* community', individuals should share the thoughts and practices inherited from their ancestors and so maintain historically continuous and harmonious social connections

(see Introduction). Only when the people can show this ‘traditional’ character of their community to the government can they obtain economic and political benefit. In other words, in the new policies, demonstrating their historical continuity as an ‘*adat* community’ is becoming more and more important for local communities. In this arena, culture and identity emerge as important factors in order to be recognised as an ‘*adat* community’. For example, among the Dayak people in Malinau in east Kalimantan, actors at the district level are creating new links with other district and village actors, and by doing so, they try to consolidate their power and demonstrate their traditional right to natural resources. The basis of their links is their identity as Dayak; thus ‘ethnicity has come to play a more important and political role in how villagers define and align themselves *vis-à-vis* others’ (Rhee 2009: 46-56). However, it is often difficult for tribespeople to do this. First, most of tribespeople did not have literary records until recent years, and it is impossible to show a written record of their history. Second, tribespeople often have heterogeneous social structures in which *adat* is diverse, and their communities are often far from politically and culturally integrated (Li 1999). This is different from what the government image of ‘*adat* community’ seems demand.

Despite of such difficulties, tribespeople have begun configuring the image of a historically continuous community. In this process, they are trying to conceptualise and elaborate their *adat*, choose and declare their identity, and designate and claim their territory. By doing so, they can go fit into the government image of ‘*adat* community’ and try to obtain a certain legitimated position in the state politics. ‘Governmentality’ is stimulating local agency to affirm their position in a way acceptable to the government’s view. In this situation, tribespeople are adopting and demonstrating their position as ‘*adat* community’ – that is, indigenising themselves in accordance with the image of ‘*adat* community’ that was created in the government imagination of how they should be – in other words, their ‘conduct’ needs to be ‘traditional’ and ‘indigenous’.

In summary, the state has taken an essential role in the formation of tribespeople or *orang asli* in eastern Sumatra. In the long historical process, the Malay identity was linked to subordination and loyalty to the pre-colonial state, people who did not adopt the identity – that is to say, ‘non-Malays’ – gradually formed their position as

orang asli. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the state fixed their ethnonyms and territories and embedded them in the polity, but left them as they were because of economic and political reasons. After the independence of Indonesia, the state designated them as needing to develop their way of life and to become ordinary rural Indonesians. In this process, the state adopted the pre-colonial and colonial ethnic categories, and the position of *orang asli* was fixed. However, in the recent ‘decentralised’ regime, their position has begun to be respected and honoured as a symbol of autonomy and the tradition connected with the concept of an ‘*adat* community’. Tribespeople, who had been seen as ‘primitive’ and ‘backward’, have been increasingly regarded as ‘indigenous peoples’, which by implication involves someone whose rights should be protected.

It is remarkable that present-day ethnicity among *orang asli* groups is deeply related to the ethnic category which the Siak kingdom developed and imposed in its politics and economy. Also remarkable are the meanings of development that the post-independence government attached to their ethnicity. Because these categories and meanings come from the imagination of outsiders, their images are simplified and do not always coincide with the actual practices, thoughts and aspirations of the people themselves. In this way, their identity as tribespeople is not primordial. Rather, they have adopted the government image and constructed and transformed their ethnicity flexibly and situationally. Indeed, although the Suku Asli talk of ethnicity at present, it has been obviously formed since the mid-nineteenth century and it does not always conform to the government category. Their attempts to show the position of their ‘*adat* community’ in present-day Indonesian politics are very recent as they involve objectification and embodiment of the ‘*adat* community’ reality that the government imagined. I will describe such attempts of objectification and embodiment, and explore Suku Asli agency in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

Identity as Non-Muslims: *Orang Asli*, *Peranakan* and Ancestral Worship

In Chapter 1, I described the processes of the formation of ‘indigenous people’ living in eastern Sumatra under state control. In the pre-colonial era, the category of *orang asli* was gradually established in relation to the Malays, in which the degree of subjugation to the state was the criterion for distinguishing them. Under the Siak kingdom, the government designated ethnic names for the Utan, Akit and Rawa for the purpose of controlling peripheral areas and resources. Post-independence Indonesia inherited these categories and defined them as the subjects of development programmes. From the state’s definition of KAT, ‘Suku Asli’ and ‘Akit’ are separate ethnic groups who have maintained their culture and the tradition of their ancestors. However, these categories are not always the same as those of the people concerned. They have their own understanding of who they are, an understanding of their historical and practical experiences. The main issue of this chapter is to explore such categories and collective identity at some remove from the government category.

The Suku Asli are basically those who were called the Utan in the government categorisation scheme. In 2006, the government recognised the change of ethnic name from ‘Utan’ to ‘Suku Asli’ as a result of the activities by their ethnic organisation (for this process, see Chapter 4). The term ‘*suku asli*’ is equivocal. Its literal meaning in Indonesian is ‘indigenous people’ or ‘tribespeople’ with the same meaning as ‘*orang asli*’. Indeed, the Suku Asli may use this term for indicating any indigenous people or tribespeople in Indonesia and in the world. However, this usage is rare and not related to their identity. When they use it with the implication of identity, it mainly indicates three different categories of people. First, in the broadest sense, it means ‘indigenous people living around the estuary area of the Siak River’. In this sense, the Utan, Akit and Rawa are included in this term, and they use it for

distinguishing themselves from the Malays, Javanese and so on.²⁵ Second, it indicates the people who were called the Utan, which the government recognised as KAT, and which I am exploring in this thesis. In this usage, Suku Asli are one of the *orang asli* groups and distinguished from the Akit and Rawa. Third, in the narrowest sense, it is used for distinguishing the ‘real’ from *peranakan* Suku Asli within Suku Asli communities. In this context, ‘Suku Asli’ indicates the ‘real’ Suku Asli, and its antonym is ‘*peranakan*’ who are the descendants of Chinese men and Utan women.

In any instance of the three usages, present-day Suku Asli may emphasise their connections based on ancestry (*nenek moyang*), which they express in the phrase, ‘We have the same ancestors’ (*nenek moyangnya sama*). This view elicits an analysis that Suku Asli have been integrated by common ancestry and is true to some extent in relation to the Malays and Javanese. However, if considering their actual practices in detail, we can find that their view of ‘having the same ancestors’ is instead a product of arbitrary imagination, and their identity does not really depend on their ancestry. They do not care about one’s concrete genealogies when distinguishing ‘us’ and ‘others’, and they categorise people with different ancestry as Suku Asli. If so, how have they distinguished ‘us’ and ‘others’ and maintained their differences from the other ethnic groups around them?

In this chapter, I would like to explore Suku Asli collective identity and categorisation in terms of ethnicity as it was formed outside the state’s definitions. First, I describe their perception of ‘having the same ancestors’ and its historical background by focusing on their relationships with the Akit and Rawa as well as with the Malays. Second, I describe the relationship between ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli and show that they distinguish their ancestries in ritual practices. Third, integrating their perceptions and practices, I analyse how they have formed and maintained their identity, and reveal its limits. Through these descriptions, I present the core of their identity before the recent demonstration of their indigeneity. The essential component of this core is non-Islamic religious practices and beliefs. The people who rejected Islamic religion intermarried living in the space around the banks of brackish rivers, and their descendants constitute the present-day Suku Asli.

²⁵ The Sakai, who live in the upstream of the Siak River, are usually not involved in this category, as they have not had historical connections with them.

However, as non-Islamic religious practices have not been integrated into a single whole, Suku Asli identity is limited; it is loose and flexible. Indeed, this situation became the basis of their manifestation of indigeneity.

Identity and the category of Suku Asli

'We have the same ancestors': The Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa

Let me start with a description of conversations with Suku Asli informants. One afternoon, I talked with Pak Odang sitting on a bench fixed at the front terrace of his house. Pak Odang was in his mid-forties and took the role of the *adat* manager (*kepala adat*) in IKBBSA (Suku Asli ethnic organisation; see Chapter 4) in Teluk Pambang. He was respected by the villagers as he was a famous shaman, or *dukun*, and also had much knowledge of *adat*. While he was an incumbent of IKBBSA, he was not involved in the political activities of the ethnic organisation. I often went to his house to hear about their *adat*, history and rituals.

On that day, I asked him a prepared question about their history. In my experience of fieldwork among the Akit in Rupert, I knew the oral history, according to which the Akit and Utan were originally the same group and, then, the sultan divided them into different groups. After talking about that oral history, I asked him whether he thought that the Suku Asli and Akit had the same ancestors. He answered: 'Right, I know that the Akit have such a story. Maybe, it is true.' As he had kinsmen living in Rupert, he knew the history of the Akit as well. He continued:

But what I heard from elders is slightly different. According to them, our ancestors lived in the Rawa region. Then, they moved to islands such as Bengkalis and Ransang. Some of them moved to Rupert, and they are the Akit. Probably, that story was created when our ancestors were moving. Anyway, we have the same ancestors.

According to him, after their ancestors moved to Bengkalis Island, they were recognised as Utan by the Siak kingdom. He estimated that the period was around the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Both the Suku Asli and Akit recognise that they have the same ancestors. This view is not only based on the oral history above but also their historically continuous moves. Present-day Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa have many anecdotes of individuals' moving between distant communities in the recent past. For example, a *batin* headman of the Akit in Rupert, living around the beginning of the twentieth century, was an Utan from Bengkalis Island. Also, a Rawa informant stated that the Utan headmen in Tebing Tinggi Island had frequently visited the Rawa region in the past. This also applied to Pak Odang's life history. He was born in a village on Ransang Island, which is several dozen kilometres east from Teluk Pambang, where most of the population was Suku Asli. While he had been a fisherman in his home village, he was employed by Chinese middleman, or *touke*, and engaged in logging and cargo work in several places. When he worked as a logger of mangrove timber in Selat Akar, on the east coast of Padang Island, he became acquainted with a woman born in Teluk Pambang, who was making a trip to a kinsman's house for a while. He married her, and moved to Teluk Pambang at the end of the 1980s. He built a house on the land of her parents and still lives there. One of his daughters married an Akit living in Rupert. It is very usual that people have similar experiences, and they have strong networks over the distant islands and beyond the ethnic categories of the Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa. As a result, they feel a deep connection which goes beyond the categories of Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa.

In the same way, I asked Pak Koding the same question as Pak Odang, in which I presented the Akit story and asked about the origin of Suku Asli in Teluk Pambang. Pak Koding was a *peranakan* Suku Asli in his early-seventies, and his paternal grandfather was a Chinese labourer from Teochew. His wife's sister was Odang's wife, and he was the father of Pak Ajui who was the *batin* headman of the IKBBSA. He was born and has lived in Teluk Pambang all his life and knew the history of the village thoroughly. He was also a famous *dukun* in this village. Pak Koding did not know the Akit story and regarded the Suku Asli in this village as being from the Rawa region. However, he continued, 'The Akit work in mangrove logging (*kerja bakau*) just like Suku Asli. So, probably, they have the same ancestors with us.' He categorised the Akit as having the same ancestors based on their dependency on mangrove logging. Their oral history, historical moves and engagement in mangrove

logging create the flexibility of identity experienced among the Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa.

Another day, I was taking with Pak Odang again, and it was a chat about everyday things rather than an interview. In the conversation, he said his plan was to move to Rupert some years later and live in a house near his daughter's house. Hearing his plan, I asked him: 'If you live in Rupert, are you Akit or Suku Asli?' He laughed at my question and considered it for just a moment. Then, he answered: 'The Akit are also Suku Asli. So, it's the same. But it's okay that people call me Akit if I live in Rupert. I have family there, and probably I may well become an Akit.'

In his comment, there are some important points in terms of identity and group categorisation. First, he stated 'The Akit are also Suku Asli'. Indeed, in terms of the relationship between the categories of Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa, people often comprehend one category as another. Generally, the Suku Asli identify the Akit and Rawa with Suku Asli and call them 'Suku Asli'. On the other hand, the Akit in Rupert usually refer to Suku Asli and Rawa as 'Akit'. In short, these categories are very flexible and not mutually exclusive.²⁶ Second, he said 'But it's okay to call me Akit if I live in Rupert.' Indeed, during my fieldwork in Rupert, I met some people who had been born in Bengkalis as Utan but identified themselves as Akit. An informant in Teluk Pambang said to me: 'Akit live in Rupert, Rawa live around Rawa River, and Suku Asli live in Bengkalis (and other islands around).' This means that they classify one based on the place that he/she lives. Yet, people have occasionally moved from place to another. Once they have moved, they easily change their identification of the ethnic categories from one to another in accordance with the place.

Therefore, their way of identification is different from the definition of KAT by the state. The state defines the Suku Asli and Akit as different '*adat* communities', in which the people are seen as maintaining distinctive *adat* that were inherited from their ancestors and as being distinctive and independent ethnic groups. However, their identities are much more flexible and decided only by the place in which one lives. In other words, in terms of self-identification, the identities of Suku Asli (the

²⁶ It is very usual that when they classify the people, they use a set consisting of an ethnic name and a name for a place. For example, Suku Asli call the Akit '*Suku Asli Rupert*', and Akit call Suku Asli in Bengkalis '*Orang/Suku Akit Bengkalis*'.

Utan), Akit and Rawa are regional identities, but not ethnic identities that may often be defined by sharing or not sharing descent and culture.

They express the comradeship and connection among the Suku Asli, Akit, and Rawa in the phrase, 'We have the same ancestors'. However, it is uncertain that they actually have the same ancestors. Although they have an oral tradition that sustains this view, it is ambiguous and has different versions. If we consider their situation, in which their *adat* differs from place to place and even within a single community, as mentioned later, and dialects also vary to some extent, it is more probable that their ancestors did not have a common origin. However, it is certain that they have historically moved from a community to another and married with each other. The view of 'having the same ancestors' is an image based on this fact.

The category and identity of Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa do not have strict ethnic boundaries between them, and they distinguish these categories only on regional criteria. They recognise that they have the same ancestors and similar cultural traits. This means that they have an identity that goes beyond the regional categories of Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa – that is, *orang asli* identity – which can be seen as an ethnic identity. This identity has clear boundaries in relation to the Malays.

Boundary with Muslims

In Chapter 1, I described the historical relationship between *orang asli* and Malays. On the one hand, people who subordinated themselves to the state control and adopted the 'Malayu' identity became Malay. On the other hand, people, who were not completely subjected to the state control were *orang asli*. Therefore, it is natural that their boundary was flexible and ambiguous in the first step of forming the categories. The sharing of some cultural practices between them backs their past connections. For example, although there is some difference in vocabularies and pronunciations, the dialects of the Malays and *orang asli* are mutually intelligible. Also, the traditional instruments and performances in rituals including resin incense, *sirih* box (*tepak sirih*) and *silat* (Malay martial arts or dance) are common among them.

However, in the process in which the state implemented the hierarchical system in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the boundaries were gradually institutionalised and fixed. Hijmans van Anrooij (1885: 324) describes the communication between *hamba raja* (Malays) and *rakyat raja* (*orang asli* and a part of present-day Malays) as follows: ‘According to *adat*, *rakyat raja* are not allowed to eat together with *hamba raja*, and the latter do not give daughters to the former or obtain them from the former in marriage’ (1885:324 [my translation]).²⁷ This indicates that the Malays avoided the communication with *orang asli* in the hierarchal system of the Siak kingdom.

On the other hand, *orang asli* also institutionalised the avoidance of communication with the Malays, and their avoidance of the marriage with the Malays at present clearly shows the significance of the boundary between them and the Malays. Today, marriages between Suku Asli and Malays are very rare. When I questioned some Suku Asli whether they permitted their children to marry with Malays, their faces always showed embarrassment. Indeed, if a Suku Asli, either man or woman, marries a Malay, he/she is no longer regarded as Suku Asli. The person should basically live as Malay in the partner’s Malay community and communication with his/her Suku Asli kinsmen and friends would be limited.

One day, I talked with Pak Odang. I asked him the reason why Suku Asli have rejected the marriage with the Malays pointing out that, for me, their culture and language seem to be mutually similar. According to him,

Maybe, Suku Asli and Malay ancestors are the same, and the Malays were also a kind of *orang asli* in the far past. However, their ancestors converted to Islam. This is different from our ancestors. [...] Our ancestors were not Muslims, and we have never believed in Islam. The people who became Muslim (*masuk Islam*) have to throw away our *adat*. They do not respect Suku Asli ancestors anymore and have to go out of Suku Asli community.

His comments summarise some important points of the relationship between the Suku Asli and Malays. First, he emphasised the difference in ancestry. Although he

²⁷ He continues that the distinction between *hamba raja* and *rakyat raja* was becoming less strictly protected around that time and points out that there were some cases of marriages between them (1885: 324-325). While this seems to be the case for a part of the *rakyat raja*, who became the Malays in the following period (including the Petalangan and the Orang Laut) and a part of the Sakai, this was applicable to Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa.

recognised the possibility that Suku Asli and Malays had had the same ancestors in the remote past, he divided the ancestors into two, i.e. those who had converted to Islam and those who had not converted and, along these lines, regarded Suku Asli ancestors as different from those of the Malays. Although some other informants insisted that their ancestors had been completely different from those of the Malays, they generally claimed their difference from the Malays were because of the differences in the ancestors' religion. Second, they avoid marriage not only with the Malays but with Muslims. Indeed, they avoid marriage with the Javanese, who immigrated into this area at the turn of the twentieth century. According to my survey of more than three hundred households of Suku Asli, Javanese and Malays in the western part of Teluk Pambang, there were only two Suku Asli women who married Muslim men. They converted to Islam, and the Suku Asli villagers said that they were not Suku Asli anymore. Their communication with Suku Asli villagers was extremely limited. In addition, there was a case of a Javanese man married with a Suku Asli woman, but he changed his registration of *agama* to Buddhism. Suku Asli villagers recognised that 'he became Suku Asli (*masuk Suku Asli*)'. Therefore, what they have tried to avoid is the introduction of Islam into their community rather than marriage with Malays itself. This avoidance is a rigid one, and there were no Suku Asli who believed in Islam or had a spouse believing in Islam in Teluk Pambang. Finally, he explained the reason why they avoid the marriage with Muslims. This is because the people who married Muslims have to abandon their *adat*. 'Adat' in Suku Asli society indicates, first and foremost, rituals involving ancestral worship (see Chapter 5). In Islamic law, the spouse of a Muslim has to convert to Islam (Clarke 2000: 287); thus Suku Asli regarded those who married Malays and Javanese as abandoning their *adat*. In other words, in his comments, it is essential for being the Suku Asli to follow their *adat*.

Avoiding marriage with the Muslims is a practice held in common among the Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa, and they generally give explanations which echo Odang's comment. For them, the categories of *orang asli* and Muslim are different and mutually exclusive. Indeed, they strongly reject being called 'Malay' in spite of their cultural and linguistic similarity. Therefore, *orang asli* identity has a clear boundary

in relation to the Malays and Javanese, which reflects their non-Islamic religious practices.

Along similar lines, generally for the Malays and Javanese in Riau, marriage with an *orang asli* partner is not desirable. This is because they perceive the *orang asli* as having strong supernatural power and knowledge of magic (Chou 2003: 52-72; Porath 2003:108-109) – something that makes them dangerous. Indeed, the Malays and Javanese living in the villages and towns sometimes asked me about the Suku Asli practices of magic and advised me to be careful. For them, the marriage is acceptable only when the *orang asli* partner has converted to Islam and abandoned his/her magical power and practices.

However, interestingly, if compared with other *orang asli* groups around Riau, the boundary with the Malays and Muslims among the Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa is remarkably strong. As far as I know, all other *orang asli* groups, such as the Sakai, Orang Laut, Orang Rimba, Bonai and Talang Mamak, have accepted Islam and Malays to some extent, although they also have a history in which they more or less rejected Islam and marriage with the Malays in the past. For example, in Sakai society, most people identify themselves as Muslim, and there is a term '*Sakai Melayu*' that indicates the mixed-blood people between the Sakai and Malay (Porath 2003: 6). For them, being Sakai is not really exclusive in relation to being Malay and Muslim. Even if it is merely nominal, many *orang asli* in eastern Sumatra register their *agama* as Islam at the government administrative offices. In addition, the boundaries with Islam and Malays among the Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa communities seem to have been much weaker in the past than it is today. The fact that quite a few Utan communities converted to Islam before the mid-nineteenth century backs this assumption (see Chapter 1). Why has the boundary with Muslims and Malays been institutionalised in such a strong way only among *orang asli* society living in the Siak estuary? This is related to their connection to the Chinese and, furthermore, the core of their ethnicity. I will return to this question in the last section of this chapter.

Relationship between the ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli

The formation of the peranakan Suku Asli

In the comments above, Pak Odang emphasised the importance of maintaining *adat*. However, this does not mean that their religious practices are completely integrated or that they always have to follow it. Indeed, there are people who do not conduct rituals in accordance with *adat* in their communities, but they are regarded as Suku Asli as well. Furthermore, in their ritual practices, such people distinguish their ancestry from other Suku Asli. This is concerned with the relationship between the ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli.

First, let me explain the term ‘*peranakan*’ and the historical emergence of *peranakan* Suku Asli. The term ‘*peranakan*’ in Malay originally meant ‘local-born’ or ‘native’ (Tan Chee-Beng 2004: 34; Wilkinson 1957: 27). However, in Indonesia, the term was specifically used for ethnic Chinese and indicated ‘local-born Chinese’ in relation to ‘China-born Chinese’, as they were distinguished in terms of legal rights during the colonial era. After Indonesian-born Chinese became the majority of the total Chinese population in the mid-twentieth century, the term has been used for indicating ‘acculturated Chinese’ with emphasis on the cultural sense (Suryadinata 1978: 2). In the twenty first century, more and more ethnic Chinese prefer to identify themselves as *peranakan*, as this address includes the implication of being Indonesians (Reid 2009). However, the definition and identity of *peranakan* varies from place to place in accordance with the local situation of the Chinese, because the identity and category of *peranakan* has been generally formed by local relationships of the ethnic Chinese and native populations (Coppel 2013: 347).

On the east coasts of Sumatra, *peranakan* describes, first and foremost, the mixed-blood between the ethnic Chinese and Indonesian-origin populations such as Malay, Javanese and *orang asli*. In general, while those who have only Chinese ancestors are referred to as ethnic Chinese (*Orang Tionghua*; *Orang Cina*), those who have both native and Chinese ancestors identify themselves and are identified as *peranakan*. The people to whom I am referring as ‘*peranakan* Suku Asli’ (*Suku Asli peranak*; *peranakan*) are a part of such *peranakan* who relate to Suku Asli ancestors.

While *peranakan* or *peranakan* Chinese may live in Chinese communities and maintain the Chinese language, the *peranakan* Suku Asli have generally lost the Chinese language and live in Suku Asli communities.²⁸ The only point that differentiates them from the ‘real’ Suku Asli (*Suku Asli*; *Suku Asli asli*; *Suku Asli betul*) is that they have maintained Chinese surnames that are inherited through the paternal line, and conduct rituals in the *peranakan* or ‘Chinese’ way. Both peoples identify themselves as Suku Asli and share almost all aspects of everyday life without any distinctions.

The emergence of the *peranakan* Suku Asli is related to the manner of Chinese immigration in this region. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, a mass Chinese immigration occurred through the state’s implementation of the *panglong* system between the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. A large number of Chinese entered the rural forest areas on the east coast of Sumatra for the purpose of harvesting timber. In this immigration, two kinds of Chinese visited the forest where the Utan, Akit and Rawa lived. The first kind was traders. They were locals who had formed settlements in some towns of eastern Sumatra or who were dispatched from companies in Singapore and Melaka. They mainly engaged in the management of harvesting forest products and their export. Their numbers were relatively small and most of them went back to their home areas after their work was done. However, some of them settled in the rural areas and became local middleman or *touke*. They had connections with trading towns, and maintained social and commercial ties with the Chinese. The second kind was the many temporary labourers, or ‘coolies’, who engaged in physical labour in the forest under the *touke*’s management. They were from various areas in southern coastal China and were exclusively men.

The Chinese migrants established trading posts on the banks of brackish rivers, which had sufficient depth for exporting ships and were near to the hinterland forest.

²⁸ In the past, the criteria distinguishing the *peranakan* Chinese and *peranakan* Suku Asli seem to have been, first, whether one could speak the Chinese language or not, and, second, whose community one lived in. In addition, the criterion distinguishing ‘pure’ and *peranakan* Chinese must have been whether one was mixed-blood or not. However, these criteria have become vague. This is because, in recent years, more and more *peranakan* Chinese (and even some of those who seemed to be ‘pure’ Chinese) who spoke the Chinese language within their family and lived in Chinese communities have identified themselves as ‘(*peranakan*) Suku Asli’ because they obtained the identity of the Suku Asli from the IKBBSA (see Chapter 4); and more and more ‘pure’ Chinese who did not have kinship connections with the natives have identified themselves as ‘*peranakan* (Chinese)’ in the state policies to the ethnic Chinese (see the later part of this chapter).

Some of these areas overlapped with the space where the Utan, Akit and Rawa lived. The Utan and Chinese lived in the same or nearby settlements, and the middlemen often also employed the Utan as labourers. Some Chinese labourers married *orang asli* women because the number of Chinese women was very small.

As the Chinese labourers were transients who had temporary contracts with *touke* and the companies, most of them left the forest areas after they completed their work. According to Suku Asli informants, some moved to Chinese communities in this region together with their Utan wife and children. They lived as members of a Chinese community and their descendants maintained the Chinese language and culture. They are *peranakan*, but specifically *peranakan* Chinese, who did not have strong social ties with Suku Asli and spoke Chinese language within their family. On the other hand, there were labourers who went back to China or moved to Chinese communities leaving their wives and children behind. There were also some labourers who settled in the forest areas together with the Utan and died in that place. In these cases, their children were usually raised by the mother and the mother's kinsmen in a matrilineal way. These children have married the Utan or other *peranakan* living in the forest areas, repeatedly, for some generations. The elderly *peranakan* informants generally have a Chinese-migrant ancestor as their grandfather or great-grandfather. On the other hand, their marriages with the ethnic Chinese, who are usually *touke*, are relatively rare because *touke* are few in number, and they have a tendency to look for their spouses among their Chinese connections. Through the repeated marriages, their physical appearance is completely the same as Suku Asli; they have lost the Chinese language and most of Chinese culture, and they have engaged in the same economic activities as Utan.

However, they distinguish descent based on the criterion of whether one has a Chinese surname (*sei*) or not. On the one hand, the Utan had a bilateral kinship system and did not distinguish paternal and maternal kinsmen in terms of kinship terminologies, marriage avoidance and the right of inheritance. They prohibit marriages with bilateral kinsmen, and one cannot marry with people who are alleged to have any consanguineous relationship. This is still the case among present-day 'real' Suku Asli, and, naturally, they do not have surnames that signal one's specific descent. On the other hand, the ethnic Chinese have a patrilineal kinship system and

distinguish paternal and maternal kinsmen (Clarke 2000; Tan Chee-Beng 1982, 1988; Tan Yao Sua & Ngah 2013). The *peranakan* Suku Asli also have this system and have Chinese surnames passed through the paternal line. They prohibit the marriage of a couple who have the same surname even when they do not have any consanguineous relationship, but often allow marriage between ‘cross cousins’. They also have kinship terminologies that distinguish paternal and maternal kinsmen.

At a marriage between the ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli, the wife and the children follow the husband’s custom. For example, when a woman with a surname marries a male without a surname, the female’s surname disappears, she and children follow the marriage rule of the ‘real’ Suku Asli. On the other hand, when a male with a surname marries a female without a surname, the female acquires the husband’s surname and she and children follow the rule of the *peranakan* Suku Asli. As these marriages occurred frequently, all ‘real’ Suku Asli have close consanguineous or in-law kinsmen amongst the *peranakan* Suku Asli, and vice-versa. Every *peranakan* household recognises its own Chinese surname. Suku Asli generally know that a household is either ‘real’ or *peranakan* Suku Asli in their local community.

There are the *peranakan* people in Akit and Rawa communities as well (*Akit/Rawa peranak*), and the number is sizable. According to my survey in Rupert and Bengkalis, 30-40% of all Suku Asli or Akit households had Chinese surnames. However, in Teluk Pambang, about 70% of all Suku Asli households had Chinese surnames.²⁹ The reason why this village shows such a high rate, according to villagers, is because there was a timber mill managed by an ethnic Chinese until the 1950s, and many ethnic Chinese continuously moved to this village from the towns of Bengkalis and Selat Panjang where there are large Chinese communities.

‘Real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli are close kinsmen and intimate neighbours, and share almost all aspects of their everyday life. Both of them have engaged in mangrove logging as their main livelihood and obtained cash income by supplying the timber to *touke* (see Chapter 3). When they need the support of other people, as

²⁹ I surveyed 185 households of Suku Asli in Teluk Pambang (according to the 2010 census there were a total of 346 Suku Asli households in Teluk Pambang; see Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Bengkalis 2010), in which 141 households had Chinese surnames, while 44 households did not. On the other hand, in Titi Akar in Rupert I surveyed all 275 households of the Akit in 2006. In this survey, 102 households had Chinese surnames (42%). While I investigated the number in the other villages with smaller samples, it is only Teluk Pambang where the percentage of *peranakan* was higher than non-Chinese-descended *orang asli*.

in hunting and construction of buildings, they cooperate with each other without any distinctions to do with descent. When they hold rituals, they participate in them and support their preparation, although, as I will explore in detail in the next section, their practices are different. It is true that some *peranakan* Suku Asli are better-off than the 'real' Suku Asli, as they have maintained relatively close social ties with *touke* and been able to obtain work. However, it is also the case that the economic situation of many *peranakan* is almost the same as the ordinary 'real' Suku Asli.

Sharing Suku Asli and Chinese 'cultures'

Although the *peranakan* Suku Asli have lost almost all Chinese language and identity, they have maintained their Chinese culture in some spheres. First of all, one sphere is their kinship system and terminology. As mentioned above, the *peranakan* Suku Asli have inherited a patrilineal kinship system. While they prohibit the marriage of a couple who have the same Chinese surname, they basically permit marriage between 'cross cousins'. However, in actual practice, this rule is much influenced by that of the 'real' Suku Asli. According to Pak Kiat, who was the head of my host family, there were quite a few cases of marriage with maternal kinsmen among *peranakan* villagers in Teluk Pambang in the past. However, at present, *peranakan* villagers do not want to engage in it as such marriages have not gone well. According to him, such couples suffered divorce, infertility, or a child's death. Although he emphasised the failed cases, it seems more possible that *peranakan* in this village adopted 'real' Suku Asli bilateral marriage avoidance.

Interestingly, the marriage avoidance of the 'real' Akit is different from that of the 'real' Suku Asli; they prohibit marriages between paternal cousins and permit ones between 'cross cousins' just like *peranakan* do. Although it is unclear whether the Akit acquired this marriage avoidance from their ancestors or adopted it from *peranakan*, it is a fact that marriages between 'cross cousins' are very usual among both 'real' and *peranakan* Akit in Rupert.

In addition, they maintain the Chinese kinship terminologies. The Suku Asli have two kinds of kinship terminologies that were derived from that of the Utan and

Chinese, which are characterised by bilateral and patrilineal kinship systems respectively (see Tables 1 and 2). Basically, it is said that the ‘real’ Suku Asli should use the Suku Asli way of kinship terminology and the *peranakan* Suku Asli should use the *peranakan* one. However, the terminology was used in a mixed way in practice. For example, Pak Odang was called ‘*akong*’ (‘grandfather’ in Chinese) by his wife’s sister’s son’s children. I asked him why he was called by the Chinese term ‘*akong*’, though he was a ‘real’ Suku Asli. He recognised that it was better to refer to him as ‘*nek*’ (‘grandfather’ in Suku Asli). However, he stated that using the Chinese term ‘*akong*’ was also no problem because ‘*akong*’ was more useful than ‘*nek*’. According to him, while ‘*akong*’ can clearly indicate ‘grandfather’, ‘*nek*’ indicates either ‘grandfather’ or ‘grandmother’ and it is vague if used in conversation. He concluded, ‘There are some ways to call family relatives in this village. The terms are different but the meaning is the same.’ In addition, it is remarkable that, in the kinship terminology of *peranakan* (see Table 2), ‘real’ Suku Asli terms are adopted in the addresses of the juniors in the same generation and the descendants. This means that they maintain a Chinese form of address only for ancestors. According to them, this is because they need to respect elders and ancestors.

Second, another sphere, which the ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli have shared, is their religious beliefs. In Suku Asli society, there are two kinds of specialists who can directly communicate with spirits. One is the shamans (*dukun, bomo asli*) derived from Utan culture. They can be possessed by spirits living in the natural world (*datuk*), and send their souls to distant places or the other world (see Chapter 4). Another kind is Chinese spirit mediums (*bomo cina; kiton*). They can be possessed by Chinese deities such as Guan Yu (*Kwan tei*) and Guanyin (*Kwat’im*) with Chinese costumes and instruments (see photographs 1 & 2). Both of them often hold séances for healing illness or praying for a settlement’s peace. Both ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli can become one or both of these specialists, and indeed, there are many such people. Also, sacred places are maintained by both specialists. Such a place is called ‘*keramat*’ in ‘real’ Suku Asli and ‘*datuk kong*’ in Chinese.³⁰

³⁰ Strictly speaking, ‘*datuk kong*’ is a combination of Malay and Chinese words. ‘*Datuk*’ means elder or grandfather in Malay and ‘*kong*’ also means grandfather in Chinese. The ethnic Chinese in the Malay World generally call sacred places by this name, and some of them are also shared by the Malays in different areas (see Cheu 1998).

Table 1. Kinship Terminology: The Suku Asli Way

Relationship (Generation)	Reference		Address	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Grandparents' Generation				
Lineal	<i>Nek</i>	<i>Nek</i>	<i>Nek</i>	<i>Nek</i>
Collateral	<i>Nek</i>	<i>Nek</i>	<i>Nek</i>	<i>Nek</i>
Parent's Generation				
Lineal	<i>Bah</i>	<i>Mak</i>	<i>Bah</i>	<i>Mak</i>
Collateral				
General	<i>Pak</i>	<i>Mak</i>	<i>Pak</i>	<i>Mak</i>
Eldest	<i>Pak-tua</i>	<i>Mak-tua</i>	<i>Paktua</i>	<i>Maktua</i>
Second	<i>Pak-long</i>	<i>Mak-long</i>	<i>Paklong</i>	<i>Maklong</i>
Third	<i>Pak-anyang</i>	<i>Mak-anyang</i>	<i>Paknyang</i>	<i>Maknyang</i>
Fourth	<i>Pak-ngah</i>	<i>Mak-ngah</i>	<i>Pakngah</i>	<i>Makngah</i>
Fifth	<i>Pak-ci</i>	<i>Mak-ci</i>	<i>Pakci</i>	<i>Makci</i>
Sixth	<i>Pak-anak</i>	<i>Mak-anak</i>	<i>Paknak</i>	<i>Maknak</i>
Youngest	<i>Pak-usuh</i>	<i>Mak-usuh</i>	<i>Paksuh</i>	<i>Maksuh</i>
Affinity				
Spouse's parents	<i>Mertua</i>	<i>Mertua</i>	<i>Bah</i>	<i>Mak</i>
Ego's Generation				
Lineal				
Seniors	<i>Abang</i>	<i>Kakak</i>	<i>Bang</i>	<i>Kak</i>
Juniors	<i>Adek</i>	<i>Adek</i>	<i>Dek</i>	<i>Dek</i>
Collateral				
Seniors	<i>Sepupu</i>	<i>Sepupu</i>	<i>Bang</i>	<i>Kak</i>
Juniors	<i>Sepupu</i>	<i>Sepupu</i>	<i>Dek</i>	<i>Dek</i>
Affinity				
Spouse's Siblings	<i>Ipah</i>	<i>Ipah</i>	<i>Ipah</i>	<i>Ipah</i>
Spouse's Sibling's Spouse	<i>Meyen</i>	<i>Meyen</i>	<i>Yen</i>	<i>Yen</i>
Children's Generation				
Lineal	<i>Anak</i>	<i>Anak</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>
Collateral	<i>Anak penak</i>	<i>Anak penak</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>
Affinity				
Children's Spouse	<i>Menantu</i>	<i>Menantu</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>
Grandchildren's Generation				
Lineal	<i>Cucu</i>	<i>Cucu</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>
Collateral	<i>Cucu</i>	<i>Cucu</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>

*This data of collateral parent was collected in Teluk Pambang.

Table 2. Kinship Terminology: The *Peranakan* Way

Relationship (Generation)	Reference		Address	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Grandparent's Generation				
Patrilateral	<i>Guakong</i>	<i>Guama</i>	<i>Akong</i>	<i>Ama</i>
Matrilateral	<i>Laikong</i>	<i>Laima</i>	<i>Akong</i>	<i>Ama</i>
Parent's Generation				
Lineal	<i>Apa</i>	<i>Mak</i>	<i>Apa</i>	<i>Mak</i>
Patrilateral				
General (Seniors to Father)	<i>Apek</i>	<i>Ako</i>	<i>Apek</i>	<i>Ako</i>
General (Juniors to Father)	<i>Acek</i>	<i>Ako</i>	<i>Acek</i>	<i>Ako</i>
Eldest	<i>Tuapek</i>	<i>Tua-ko</i>	<i>Tuapek; Apek</i>	<i>Ako; Tuako</i>
Second	<i>Di-pek; Di-cek</i>	<i>Di-ko</i>	<i>Apek; Acek; Dipek; Dicek</i>	<i>Ako; Diko</i>
Third	<i>Sa-pek; Sa-cek</i>	<i>Sa-ko</i>	<i>Apek; Acek; Sapek; Sacek</i>	<i>Ako; Sako</i>
Fourth	<i>Shi-pek; Shi-cek</i>	<i>Shi-ko</i>	<i>Apek; Acek; Shipek; Shicek</i>	<i>Ako; Shiko</i>
Fifth	<i>Go-pek; Go-cek</i>	<i>Go-ko</i>	<i>Apek; Acek; Gopek; gocek</i>	<i>Ako; Goko</i>
Matrilateral				
General	<i>Aku</i>	<i>Ai</i>	<i>Aku</i>	<i>Ai</i>
Eldest	<i>Tua-ku</i>	<i>Tuai</i>	<i>Aku; Tuaku</i>	<i>Ai; Tuai</i>
Second	<i>Di-ku</i>	<i>Di-i</i>	<i>Aku; Diku</i>	<i>Ai; Dii</i>
Third	<i>Sa-ku</i>	<i>Sa-i</i>	<i>Aku; Saku</i>	<i>Ai; Sai</i>
Fourth	<i>Shi-ku</i>	<i>Shi-i</i>	<i>Aku; Shiku</i>	<i>Ai; Shii</i>
Fifth	<i>Go-ku</i>	<i>Go-i</i>	<i>Aku; goku</i>	<i>Goi; Goi</i>
Affinity				
Spouse's Parents	<i>Mertua</i>	<i>Mertua</i>	<i>Apa</i>	<i>Mak</i>
Ego's Generation				
Lineal				
Seniors	<i>Ahia</i>	<i>Aci</i>	<i>Ahia</i>	<i>Aci</i>
Juniors	<i>Adek</i>	<i>Adek</i>	<i>Adek</i>	<i>Adek</i>
Collateral				
Seniors	<i>Sepupu</i>	<i>Sepupu</i>	<i>Ahia</i>	<i>Aci</i>
Juniors	<i>Sepupu</i>	<i>Sepupu</i>	<i>Adek</i>	<i>Adek</i>
Affinity				
Spouse's Sibling	<i>Ipah</i>	<i>Ipah</i>	<i>Ipah</i>	<i>Ipah</i>
Spouse's Sibling's Spouse	<i>Meyen</i>	<i>Meyen</i>	<i>Yen</i>	<i>Yen</i>
Children's Generation				
Lineal	<i>Anak</i>	<i>Anak</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>
Collateral	<i>Anak Penak</i>	<i>Anak Penak</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>
Affinity	<i>Menatu</i>	<i>Menantu</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>	<i>N/A (name)</i>
Grandchildren's Generation				
Lineal	<i>Cucu</i>	<i>Cucu</i>	<i>N/A (Name)</i>	<i>N/A (Name)</i>
Collateral	<i>Cucu</i>	<i>Cucu</i>	<i>N/A (Name)</i>	<i>N/A (Name)</i>

*The prefixes of "Tua" means "Old" in Malay. On the other hand, the prefixes of from "Di" to "Go" means from "two" to "five" in the Chinese language.

**I used Indonesian expressions in this table based on advice from a *peranakan* Suku Asli, regardless of the four tones of Chinese pronunciation.

Around the Raya River of Teluk Pambang, there were four *keramat* that were inherited from Utan ancestors, which were managed by *dukun*. Three of them were also used as shrines for Chinese deities, and *kiton* also joined in the management of the places. While both expressions are still used in Teluk Pambang, calling the sacred places *datuk kong* is more usual than *keramat* even among ‘real’ Suku Asli. On the other hand, there were many *datuk kong*, in which only Chinese deities were enshrined, in Teluk Pambang, because *peranakan* households may establish their own *datuk kong* at the corner of their homestead.

In the same way, they have two different perspectives on the fate of the human soul. One day, I talked with Pak Odang in his house about the spirits of the dead. I asked Pak Odang where the soul of the dead goes and where the ancestral souls come from at rituals. According to him,

I don’t know. But elders said to me that after a person died, one’s soul (*roh*) separates from one’s body (*badan*). And, then, the soul goes in and out the house in which one died for seven days. Therefore, we have to leave the entrance door of the house open during the days. After that, the soul is gradually going upward and stays in the upper space of the house until the fortieth day. I do not know where it is then going. Some people say it is going to the upper world (*atas dunia*). [...] But if we call the ancestral souls (*nenek moyang*) burning incense, they certainly come and receive offerings.

Our topic moved to the influence of the dead on everyday life. According to him, the spirits of the dead did not intervene in people’s everyday life; therefore, their ancestral souls also did not protect or impede everyday life. The spirits that exerted influences on everyday life were *orang bunyian* (invisible human beings; see also Chapter 3), *datuk* (localised guardian spirit), *setan* (evil spirit), *jinn* (jinn, there are both benevolent and malevolent kinds living in the natural world) and so forth rather than ancestral souls.



Photograph 1. *Dukun* at a séance



Photograph 2. *Bomo Cina; Kiton* at a séance



Photograph 3. A *keramat* (with no *datuk kong*) and offerings for *datuk* (Raya River)



Photograph 4. A *datuk kong* that was built at a *keramat* (Raya River).

In general, Suku Asli remember their ancestors only when one has been met in the past. Thus, they usually remember ancestor's names as far as grandparents on both sides. In the rituals, they offer meals for ancestral souls. It is for all ancestral souls rather than specific ancestors. Their ancestral souls neither protect the descendants' life from misfortune or disease nor bring peace and welfare to them. More important agents which influence their everyday life are spirits living in the natural world. In the conversation above, I asked Pak Odang the reason why they hold ritual feasts for ancestors. According to him 'It is for respecting our ancestors. It is not a matter whether they will help or not'. For them, rituals are practices or institutions that were inherited from the past, and their importance lies in 'paying respect'.

After the conversation above, Pak Odang added, 'But this is the ['real'] Suku Asli case. In the case of the Chinese dead, the soul may intervene in our life'. Chinese interpretations of ancestors are different from the Suku Asli way, and, indeed, I often heard and observed the *peranakan*/Chinese view of ancestral souls. For instance, I saw that some *peranakan* fathers repeatedly teach their small children the names of the paternal grandfathers of several generations back as far as they knew them, or made a list of the ancestors and put it on the wall behind the altar (*tepekong*). A *peranakan* explained to me that their ancestral souls were living in a different world that was almost the same as the 'real' world. Therefore, they were obliged to offer meals to them and provide money and consumables by burning paper money (*kertas mas*). If they ignored the obligations, their ancestral souls became angry and did not protect the peace of the descendant's house. As a result, misfortune and disease might be caused. A *peranakan* described the meaning of their offerings as: 'If we do not provide food and money for the ancestors, how do they live? If our children will not do it, how can I live after my dying?' His comment implies that their cosmology involves a strong connection between their ancestral souls and the living or the descendants realised through 'Chinese' ancestral rituals (Clarke 2000: 289).

While there are two interpretations of ancestral souls and their significance, the actual interpretation adopted is generally dependent on individuals. For example, some days after the conversation with Pak Odang, I talked to Pak Koding, a

peranakan Suku Asli, about what I had heard from Pak Odang. As I was talking about the topic of ancestral souls, he nodded in agreement. Then, I asked him whether there was a case where *peranakan* ancestors may have intervened in everyday life. He answered 'Right, but it's an opinion of some *bomo cina*'. According to him, the spirit mediums of Chinese deities occasionally attributed the cause of disease to the lack of ancestral souls or the malevolent souls of the dead. However, he concluded 'It's a Chinese way. I don't know which is true. But I have not experienced that the ancestral souls intervene in our life'.

In terms of these kinship systems and religious beliefs, one or both of them are adopted depending on the social connection between them. A 'real' Suku Asli who has only a small number of *peranakan* kinsmen and neighbours may take only 'real' Suku Asli ways, but those who have many *peranakan* ones may take both 'real' and *peranakan* Suku Asli ways. The *peranakan* Suku Asli also adopt one or both of them in the same way.

The distinction of ancestral worship

However, in their practice of ancestral worship, they distinguish 'real' and *peranakan* Suku Asli quite strictly. In Suku Asli society, there are two ways of conducting rituals called 'Suku Asli way (*acara Suku Asli; adat*)' and '*peranakan/Chinese way (acara peranak/Thionhua)*'. On the one hand, 'real' Suku Asli hold rituals in the Suku Asli way, which can be characterised by its similarity to Malay culture. The basic rituals are weddings, funerals, the anniversary of the dead (*kenduri*) and the feast of the New Year (*tujuh likur*). In these rituals, they perform *silat*, play music with drums, viola and flute, eat areca nuts and betel leaves kept in a *sirih* box, burn resin incense and wear Malay-style dresses including the sarong. In addition to these basic rituals, circumcision (*sunat*) was held in the past. This ritual included a large feast, traditional dances, music and ceremonies, and an elder who knew the technique gave a small nick to a boy's phimotic foreskin. It was essential

for boys before getting married, and the marriages of males, who had not undergone this ritual, were not allowed or recognised by the community.³¹

On the other hand, the *peranakan* Suku Asli conduct their rituals in the *peranakan*/Chinese way, in which they use Chinese symbols such as incense stick (*hyou*), red colour, Chinese letters, *kertas mas* and sometimes short Chinese phrases. In addition to weddings, funerals and the anniversary of the dead, they hold the feast of the New Year (*imlek*) and seasonal rituals based on the Chinese lunar calendar. They also have an altar at the entrance of their house, on which Chinese deities and their ancestral souls are enshrined.³² They worship their ancestral souls and Chinese deities every morning and evening. Each member of the household burns incense stick and prays for the peace of the house in front of it every morning and evening. Their way of ritual is related to Chinese folk religion, which is often described as Confucianism (*Khonghucu*) in Indonesia (see Chapter 6).

‘Real’ Suku Asli households are expected to hold rituals in the Suku Asli way and generally do not have an altar in their houses (see also Chapter 6). Also, they do not practise everyday worship, the seasonal rituals or a large feast at *imlek* that are seen in the *peranakan*/Chinese way. On the other hand, the *peranakan* Suku Asli are expected to hold the rituals in *peranakan*/Chinese way. *Peranakan* males should not be circumcised, and their households do not hold a large feast at *tujuh likur*.

These distinctions are strict ones, and they do not permit mixing the rituals. One day, I was in Ajui’s house listening to Koding and Odang’s chat. Pak Ajui was a son of Pak Koding in his late-forties; thus he was a *peranakan* Suku Asli. He was the most powerful leader of the Suku Asli in Bengkalis Island and took the role of regency *batin*, the top of the IKBBSA in Bengkalis regency (see also Chapter 4). Sitting on chairs in the living room, Pak Koding and Odang were talking about a wedding ceremony that would be held on the weekend at the village of Penebal, one

³¹ In Teluk Pambang, although all ‘real’ Suku Asli husbands whose ages were more than forty were circumcised before their marriages, this ritual has not been held for a few decades, because, according to them, it is too costly. On the other hand, in Akit communities in Rupert, circumcision is still conducted as an essential life ceremony, which is held almost every year as a large ceremony in which neighbours cooperate.

³² Many ethnic Chinese have the tablets of their ancestors at this altar. However, *peranakan* generally do not. They place an icon of a Chinese deity and, occasionally, put a piece of red paper on which the ancestors’ names or some Chinese words are written to pray for the peace of the house hold (Cf. Tan Chee-Beng 1982: 36-37, 1983: 218).

hour distant from Teluk Pambang by motorbike. Even though it seemed to be a celebratory event, the atmosphere appeared somewhat strained. From their chat, I found that they had been invited to the ceremony in order to perform *silat* and viola. Pak Odang was a good performer of *silat* and Pak Koding was a player of viola. They always performed them when wedding ceremonies were held in Teluk Pambang. Listening to their talking, I cut in with a question, ‘So, it’s a wedding of a [‘real’] Suku Asli bride, right?’, because I had known that *silat*, viola and drum were performed only in a wedding ceremony for a Suku Asli bride, not a *peranakan* one. Pak Odang answered ‘No, it’s a *peranakan* wedding.’ This seemed odd and I asked Pak Odang why *silat* and viola were used in a *peranakan* bride’s wedding ceremony. He answered: ‘That’s the problem.’

According to him, the bride was a *peranakan* born in Penebal and worked in Jakarta. She would marry a Javanese bridegroom living in Jakarta. While there were some households of *peranakan*, her community in Penebal was ethnic Chinese and there were no performers of Suku Asli music and *silat*. On holding the wedding ceremony at her house, her family asked Pak Ajui to introduce Suku Asli performers in order to show ‘Suku Asli culture’ (*kebudayaan Suku Asli*) to the groom and his family. Pak Ajui asked Koding and Odang to attend and perform it. However, in their conversation, Pak Koding and Odang were talking about how ‘not good’ (*tek baik*) and ‘unusual’ (*bukan biasa*) performing Suku Asli dance and music was, and they obviously appeared hesitant to be involved. Although they complained for a while, they finally agreed to join it together, because Pak Ajui had requested it.

On the wedding day, I visited the site. In front of the bride’s house, some tents and a stage were set up, and many people were visiting. At first, Indonesian pop music was played by a band on the stage for a few hours, and then, Suku Asli performances began. The host family invited not only Pak Odang and Koding but also several performers from a Suku Asli community in Selat Akar, Padang Island, and they performed a song and dance on the stage. After their performance, there was an intermission. Together with Pak Koding, I visited a *peranakan* house very close to the site to have a rest. On sitting on the floor of the house, Pak Koding spoke to the ‘old man’ of the house who was his old friend, ‘Look, it’s a kind of chop suey!’ (*ini macam capcai!*). Following his comment, the old man nodded with a somewhat

bitter smile. I could not understand his comment, and asked him ‘What do you mean?’ He answered, ‘You saw that there was an altar in the [bride’s] house, right? She is actually a *peranakan*. However, they use [‘real’] Suku Asli way. Everything is mixed! So, I said “it’s chop suey”. It’s not good. It’s mistake.’ His face looked serene and smiling as usual, but his words were obviously critical. Another day, I asked Pak Koding why he complained at their use of the Suku Asli way of performances at the wedding. According to him, ‘It is because *peranakan*’s ancestors were the Chinese from China. So, we should pay respect for the Chinese ancestors (*Kami harus menghormati nenek-moyang Tionghua*).’

Ancestral worship is an essential part, not only of the wedding ceremony but also of the funeral, anniversary and New Year’s feast. In these ceremonies, the Suku Asli perform a ritual, in which ancestral souls are called to the site and have meals prepared for them. In doing so, they inform the ancestral souls of a descendant’s marriage or death and they pray for the ancestors’ peace in the other world. ‘Real’ Suku Asli descendants are expected to call their ‘real’ Suku Asli or Utan ancestors using the Suku Asli procedures of ritual, and the *peranakan* descendants are expected to call their *peranakan* or Chinese ancestors in the *peranakan*/Chinese procedures. It is disrespectful for ancestral souls that descendants mix the two ways and ignore the inherited practice from their ancestors.

Thus, the Suku Asli avoid mixing the two types of rituals. This means that they avoid the confusion of their ancestry and distinguish ‘real’ Suku Asli and *peranakan*/Chinese ancestors. It is certain that the image of ‘having the same ancestors’ is multi-layered: It is possible that while one expresses that the other has the same ancestor in the remote past, one can simultaneously believe that the other has a different ancestor in the near past. Therefore, this does not completely contradict their image of ‘Suku Asli have the same ancestors’. However, at least, it can be said that Suku Asli identity does not depend on unilateral ancestry. Furthermore, it also can be said that their *adat* is not a single and integrated one. There are two ways of ancestral ritual that is an essential component of *adat* in their community, and they have practised them. Therefore, their categorisation of ‘us’ and ‘others’ and identity as Suku Asli is not really sustained by their single ancestry or the practices of common *adat*.

Basis of their identity and its limits

*The exclusion of Islam and the acceptance of *peranakan**

The reason why the *peranakan* Suku Asli have maintained their *peranakan*/Chinese way of ancestral worship is related to the cultural manner of acculturation of the ethnic Chinese in the Malay World. There are many *peranakan* communities in Indonesia and Malaysia. For example, the *baba*, the *peranakan* of Melaka in Malaysia, have Malay ancestors in their maternal line, lost their Chinese language, acculturated with Melaka Malays, and identify themselves as the *baba* distinguishing themselves from the Malays and ‘pure’ ethnic Chinese (Tan Chee-Beng 1988, 2003). The Tirok Chinese *peranakan* in Terengganu have adopted Malay-like language, food and dress, but identify themselves as ethnic Chinese (Tan Yao Sua & Ngah 2013). *Peranakan* in Java lost the Chinese language and the connection with *totok*, and they have a distinct and independent identity from both the Javanese and Chinese (Hoadley 1988; Tan Giok-Lan 1963; Willmott 1960). In all of these cases, their identities and pattern acculturations vary from place to place, yet the common thing is that all of them maintain Chinese ancestral worship. For Chinese migrants, it has been an obligation to worship their ancestors, basically Chinese paternal ancestors (Clarke 2000; Tan Chee-Beng 1982, 1988; Tan Yao Sua & Ngah 2013).

With the strong attachment to the Chinese way of ancestral worship, which would be involved in Chinese culture, Chinese migrants in Southeast Asia have generally rejected Islam not only by rejecting conversion to it but also controlling social belonging. Among the *peranakan* Chinese in Malaysia, people who converted to Islam are eliminated from membership in the community, and “‘Chinese’ and ‘Malay’ are mutually exclusive categories’ (Clarke 2000: 290). In Indonesia, the situation is almost the same; in accordance with the rise of a ‘strict’ doctrine of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago after the mid-eighteenth century, a ‘religious barrier’ has prevented intermarriage between the ethnic Chinese and Muslims (Skinner 1996: 64-66). These membership and kinship controls are the same among the Suku Asli.

The reason why *orang asli* communities around the Siak estuary have a strict and institutionalised boundary with the Malays and Muslims is related to the rejection of Islam among the *peranakan* and Chinese. Before the mid-nineteenth century, the Utan would have rejected Islam and becoming Malay to a certain extent, yet the boundaries between themselves and Malays or Muslims would have been much weaker than they are today. There might have been a few Utan who identified themselves as Muslims or Malay. However, in the late-nineteenth century, the *panglong* system was introduced to this region. On the one hand, the Chinese migrants looked for non-Islamic spouses and mainly obtained Utan, Akit and Rawa women. This is because, on the eastern coast of Sumatra, the dominant groups of Malays, Minangkabau and Javanese are all Muslims, and the people having a non-Islamic religion are only the *orang asli*. On the other hand, *orang asli* accepted such Chinese-origin members through the mutual communication and cooperation with them. In the process of forming kinship with the ethnic Chinese, the Utan adopted the Chinese way of membership and kinship control and excluded the Muslims from their community, and the rule became an institution of *orang asli*. As a result, for the Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa, the category of ‘*orang asli*’ and ‘Malay’ or ‘Muslim’ became mutually exclusive categories.

On the other hand, the regions of other *orang asli* groups, such as the Sakai, Orang Rimba and Talang Mamak, in eastern Sumatra were not involved in the *panglong* system, and the numbers of Chinese migrants were limited. Therefore, they have accepted the Malays and Islam to a certain extent, and, for them, the categories of ‘*orang asli*’ and ‘Malay’ or ‘Muslim’ have been not exclusive ones. It is probable that if the Chinese had not immigrated in the mid-nineteenth century, the identity among the Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa would have been dramatically different and the categories of ‘Suku Asli’ and ‘Malay’ or ‘Muslim’ would have not been mutually exclusive.

‘Real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli recognise their difference of ancestry and cultural practices. If so, why do the *peranakan* Suku Asli identify themselves as Suku Asli, not Chinese or *peranakan*? Indeed, some studies of the ethnic Chinese in Malaysia show that their Chinese identity has been reproduced and maintained through ancestral worship because mutual participation and cooperation in the

ancestral rituals integrates them as a Chinese community (Clarke 2000: 288; see also Chan 2005: 102; Tan Chee-Beng 1982: 48). Even though the *peranakan* Suku Asli recognise their different ancestry, they have a reason to emphasise their common ancestry with ‘real’ Suku Asli, and this is related to the position of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia

The political distinction between ‘native’ and Chinese-origin populations in Indonesia began in the early colonial era. In the eighteenth century, the VOC government categorised Java-born Chinese (or ‘old comers’) as *peranakan* and regarded them as Dutch citizens. On the other hand, they categorised China-born Chinese (or ‘newcomers’) as *totok* and regarded them as foreigners. After the independence of Indonesia, the government categorised the *totok* as WNA (*Warga Negara Asing*: foreigners) and provided them with limited citizenship (Suryadinata 1978: 94-96). The *peranakan* have constituted a *peranakan* identity as distinct from *totok* who did not have full citizenship (Skinner 1959; Tan Mely G. 1997). In the middle of the 1960s, the government suppressed the members of the Communist Party of Indonesia elsewhere in Indonesia (30 September Movement). In this movement, many ethnic Chinese were believed to have close connections with communism and killed by the military. In the Suharto regime, while the ethnic Chinese were the dominant power in Indonesian economy, they were marginalised, discriminated against and stigmatised as people who have a foreign origin in the process of the formation of the nation state (Chua 2004). Chinese schools were closed and the representations of Chinese culture in public spaces were banned by the government. Although the oppressive policies ended in accordance with ‘*reformasi*’ in 1998, the discrimination and marginalisation of the ethnic Chinese and their identity has continued. As a result, more and more Chinese-related people identify themselves as ‘*peranakan*’ abandoning their identity as ‘Chinese’ in contemporary Indonesia (Reid 2009).

Although these harsh national policies against the ethnic Chinese did not directly influence the *peranakan* Suku Asli, they have experienced some of its fallout. According to Pak Koding, during the 30 September Movement, he heard many ethnic Chinese were killed on Babi Island, an uninhabited islet near Rupert Island. Also, during Suharto’s regime, the *peranakan* Suku Asli did not place Chinese altars

at the entrances of their houses and held ceremonies and rituals in the *peranakan*/Chinese way as minimally as they could. Even today, they know that it is not potentially beneficial or is even risky to claim their Chinese ancestry or clearly manifest Chinese culture. By identifying themselves as Suku Asli, they can demonstrate their native or indigenous position much more strongly than identifying themselves as *peranakan*. In other words, the *peranakan* Suku Asli have been in a dilemma, in which they have recognised their Chinese ancestry in rituals but emphasised their Suku Asli ancestry in politics. The emphasis on the common ancestry among the Suku Asli has been constituted not only by the historical kinship between the ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli, but also by the political emphasis on Suku Asli ancestry among the *peranakan* Suku Asli.

On the other hand, the ‘real’ Suku Asli accepted *peranakan* identification as Suku Asli for several reasons. First, the ‘real’ Suku Asli had a bilateral kinship system and did not distinguish paternal and maternal kinsmen. This means that *peranakan* and Chinese could become their kinsmen through marriage alliance. On the basis of such their kinship system, more importantly, neighbourhoods and everyday cooperation is much more important in their social ties than actual kinship. They regard people who live nearby, cooperate in activities and share food as ‘friends’ (*kawan*) (see Chapter 3), and have a strong sense of camaraderie. The *peranakan* and Chinese could share food and everyday cooperation with the Suku Asli, while Muslims cannot do so because of Islamic customs. As a result, the ‘real’ Suku Asli accepted that *peranakan* identify themselves as Suku Asli regarding them as kinsmen or friends. Second, the alliance with Chinese population did not intervene in Suku Asli traditional ancestral worship. As mentioned above, while the paternal descendants of the Chinese have to follow a *peranakan*/Chinese custom in rituals, this rule is not applied to maternal descendants. This means that the ‘real’ Suku Asli could maintain their traditional way of rituals. The Suku Asli could accept the *peranakan* without the entanglements in their *adat*, which could be very problematic in the alliance with Muslims. Finally, the alliance with the Chinese could be economically beneficial. As I will mention in the next chapter, *touke* and Suku Asli are in a relationship between patron and client. Although the *peranakan* Suku Asli have some boundaries with *touke*, they are people who have the same

ancestors with *touke* and are regarded as potential kinsmen. For ‘real’ Suku Asli, alliance with *peranakan* was desirable, as it may have brought waged labour and advantageous barter in relation to *touke*. These conditions have been created in a situation that Suku Asli, *peranakan* and *touke* have lived in the same living space of coastal banks. I will return to this topic in the next chapter.

Although the ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli have shared almost all of their everyday life, they have distinguished their ancestral rituals. This is because, as mentioned earlier, maintaining their respective rituals was essential in their culture for both of them, and this is one of the main reasons why they chose each other as the partner of alliance. On the other hand, they distinguish the Suku Asli, Akit and Rawa. This would have been, at first, the adoption of historical state politics, in which they classify themselves and other *orang asli* groups based on territory. However, their distinctions have been reinforced when they emphasised their ancestral land and established an ethnic organisation in recent years. I will return to this topic in the following chapters.

Non-Islamic alliance and its limit in state intervention

In this sense, I would like to suggest that the identity and category of Suku Asli is established on the basis of a non-Islamic alliance. With the expression ‘non-Islamic alliance’, I imply that they do not have a single ancestry or single *adat*, but their identity and category is sustained by its boundaries with the Muslims. In this sense, their identity and category are quite diverse, flexible and relational. Their non-Islamic practices are legitimated by demonstrating their position as Suku Asli who are regarded as indigenous and native in this region where Muslims have been predominant.

The difference of ancestry and ancestral worship was not problematic for the Suku Asli identity inside their communities. As they were tribespeople with a segmentary and uncentralised social structure, it was not necessary for them to integrate the diversity of ancestry and *adat*. They were connected by kinship and mutual cooperation in everyday life individually. In other words, their identities were

mutually associated by small-scale connections which can be seen as the social tie of 'indigeneity'.

However, once it was concerned with the state legitimization of their position as an indigenous ethnic group, it is necessary to prove it 'objectively' for the outsiders. As I mentioned in the Introduction, indigeneity and its Indonesian version of '*adat* community' is critical in the government policies to define people as indigenous, and cultural content is one of the main criteria in distinguishing the peoples. For the government as well as the activists of the '*adat* movement', the concrete image of *adat* in an '*adat* community' includes a common history of origins, a long-established territory, traditional political and legal institutions, common religious practices and beliefs, shared material cultures, and so on. In the wave of government interventions in local communities and the rise of *adat* movement in the recent 'decentralised' Indonesia, cultural contents became problematic.

From the 'objective' perspective on the '*adat* community', Suku Asli identity lacks integration of its cultural contents. First, in terms of their non-Islamic religion, the integration of religious practices and beliefs is not possible. As mentioned above, in the case of *peranakan*, the non-Islamic alliance has been formed through the maintenance of Chinese ancestry and ancestral worship maintaining it as a basic premise of their rejection of Islam. On the other hand, the 'real' Suku Asli, who were usually the majority of a community, also had their own form of ancestral worship. This resulted in the distinction of their ancestry and their ways of ancestral worship within a community; thus they did not have an integrated religious practices and beliefs that can be a powerful symbol of ethnic integration. Second, the common economic activities in the river banks also did not help to prove their integration. They developed their communities along brackish rivers, each of which covered a certain area of the hydrographic basin. Thus, their communities are a certain distance from each other. A number of such communities, each of which are next to Malay or Javanese settlements, are scattered like 'enclaves' over the vast area of the Siak estuary. It was quite difficult for them to have an integrated political and legal institution that directly shows their integration or could be a powerful agent to integrate their cultural contents. It was also difficult to imagine a bounded and integrated territory.

In terms of the lack of integrated territory and political institution, the situation of the Orang Laut in the Riau-Lingga Archipelago is similar to the Suku Asli. Their settlements dot the scattered inlets and isles of a vast area of the archipelagos, and they are divided into a dozen of regional groups (*suku*) such as Suku Galang, Riau, and Mantang (Chou 2010: 20-25). However, they have been regarded as the ethnic group of the Orang Laut by the state since the pre-colonial era because of their salient cultural feature to live on the boats (Chou 2010: 40-59). In a similar way, the Suku Asli might have been able to emphasise the common economic activity on the river coasts as the symbol of their cultural integration. However, this has been also quite difficult because, after the 1990s, the government has regarded mangrove logging, which was their main labour, as illegal and tried to restrict and prohibit the export of charcoal in the rise of environmentalism (see Chapter 3).

In 2005, the government began directly intervening in Suku Asli life. The government had provided them with an image of 'how they should be' through the development programme, and Suku Asli leaders found that they could claim their position as an '*adat* community' and receive support from the government by accepting and embodying the government's image. In this situation, the leaders are trying to demonstrate their rights to their historical territory, establish an ethnic organisation revitalising past *batin* headmanship, unify their diverse traditions into a performance, and summarise their religious practices under the label of Buddhism, as I will describe in the following chapters. However, these attempts do not represent complete adoption of the government's image. They have their own view of social relationships based on their history and experience. They employ a cultural logic that draws upon these images and represents their integration both internally and externally. This cultural logic is based on their common and continuous ancestry, and indeed, they connect this image of common and continuous ancestry with their living space, ethnic organisation, traditions and religion. In short, although the Suku Asli had a clear religious boundary and shared common economic activity in the river-coast space, they did not have clear cultural contents that could show their integration when interacting with the government. However, this situation has changed in recent years because of the government intervention and the rise of the

indigenous movement. It is in this context of their identity and position that indigeneity emerges in Suku Asli society.

The Suku Asli situation reminds us of Barth's argument about 'ethnic boundary' and the following debates. In his famous book on *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969), he insists that an ethnic group is defined by self-ascription and ascription by others and emphasises the importance of focusing on the formation and maintenance of ethnic boundaries. On the other hand, he calls the cultural contents of an ethnic group 'cultural stuff' (norms, values, origin myth and so on) and points out that they are not really significant for defining an ethnic group because they are chosen haphazardly (1969: 9-15). According to him,

[...] although ethnic categories take cultural differences into account, we can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of 'objective' differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant. (1969: 14)

However, as a result of his reconsideration of his own work over twenty years, he admits (1994: 16) that the choice of cultural contents is less haphazard than he argued. Individual experience, the activities of elites, and the states' policies form certain images of cultural contents, and these cultural contents support the ethnic category or group (1994: 16-29; see also Colombijn 2003b). In Suku Asli society, an ethnic boundary separating them from the Muslims existed since almost the very beginning, and this formed their history and identity without integrated 'cultural stuff'. However, the government has required them to define themselves more clearly, and they have tried to do so through attempts to integrate their cultural contents not only according to the government's image but also to their own practices and beliefs. It is these transactions between Suku Asli images and those of the government that I will explore in the following chapters.

In summary, the Suku Asli have had their own identity and category of 'us' and 'others', and have held a flexible identity – that is to say, *orang asli* identity, which comprises the Suku Ali, Akit and Rawa. This identity is sustained by their historical moves and their life on river banks, and they express this identity in the phrase: 'We have the same ancestors'. However, if examining the difference of the ancestral

worship between ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli, we can see that their identity is not really sustained by a single ancestry or common practice of ancestral worship. Instead, they have been brought together in a non-Islamic alliance in their history without a real integration of ancestry and cultural contents. When the government began to intervene in their life with the notion of ‘*adat* community’, this ambiguity and flexibility became problematic, and they are trying to show their integration based on both the government image and their own.

The flexibility and diversity of Suku Asli identity and category is derived not only from their segmentary and uncentralised social structure as coastal-foraging tribespeople, but also from the difference of ancestral worship among the *peranakan* Suku Asli. Therefore, in their ‘indigenous movement’, while they try to integrate the segmentation of social structure by connecting distant communities, they simultaneously try to legitimate the unstable position of the *peranakan* Suku Asli who have relationships with the marginalised Chinese in Indonesian state policies. Indeed, like the fact that Pak Ajui became the headman of the IKBBSA, the *peranakan* Suku Asli and their ideas have played important roles in the Suku Asli ‘indigenous movement’, and their attempts to maintain their Chinese ancestral worship while grasping a legitimated position have provided the essential motivation for the movement. In this sense, their indigenous movement has an aspect in which the potentially non-indigenous attribution of the *peranakan* Suku Asli drove them to claim and legitimate their positions as ‘indigenous peoples’ by emphasising Suku Asli commonness of culture and identity.

In such a situation, their identity both in relation to the other *orang asli* and the *peranakan* started changing. The main factor behind this change is the fashion in which their attitude to land is also changing. In the next chapter, I will explore this particular change.

Chapter 3

Consolidation of People and Place: Foraging, Space and Historic Continuity

‘Land and resources’ is a key concept for understanding the ‘indigenous movement’. International activists have tried to formulate the concept of the ‘indigenous peoples’ for the purpose of protecting the rights to land and resources among those who have lived on a particular land but been marginalised; thus, its definition always mentions a peoples’ priority in terms of access to land and its resources (Dove 2006: 192; Kenrick & Lewis 2004; Niezen 2003; Saugestad 2004). While the concrete political actions in this movement vary, that of Indonesia is generally characterised by the quest for the protection of ‘land and its resources’ against the government or government-sponsored corporations, which exploited local land and its resources under the ‘centralised’ policies prior to 1998 (Davidson & Henley 2007; Duncan 2004b; Wee 2002). In many cases, the arena of such struggle is the rainforests, from which local communities have customarily obtained their living. Local rights may often be legitimated by showing historically continuous use of the land and identity being backed by ancestral cultures in the particular regions. Thus, local authorities and activists define such lands as ancestral land that has been utilised under local *adat* (*tanah adat*; *tanah ulayat*) and try to protect locals’ right to it (Acciaioli 2007; Li 2000).

However, for the locals themselves, ancestral land has not always been clearly defined. This is not only because the historical and legal boundaries of the land are often vague in peripheral forest regions, but also because their connection with ancestors or *adat* is only one of several ways of representing locals’ attachment to and need for land. Rather, the relationship between people and land may be much more unconscious and subjective (Benjamin 2012, forthcoming) and framed according to distinct cultural logics in each local community. Some people may explain their attachment to land by ‘guardianship’ (Lye Tuk-Po 2005), or identifying woods as human beings (Effendy 2002). Or, some people may have just used the land in their past, and given no salient explanation of their connection to it in terms

of history and culture. Local elites and activists summarise such explanations or practices into the concept of ‘ancestral land’ for the purpose of legitimating their land usage. In this sense, ancestral land can be seen as a perspective, not a substantial thing. The land, which the locals feel attachment to, is objectified and emphasised as ancestral land in and through the process of demonstrating the historically continuous use of the land.

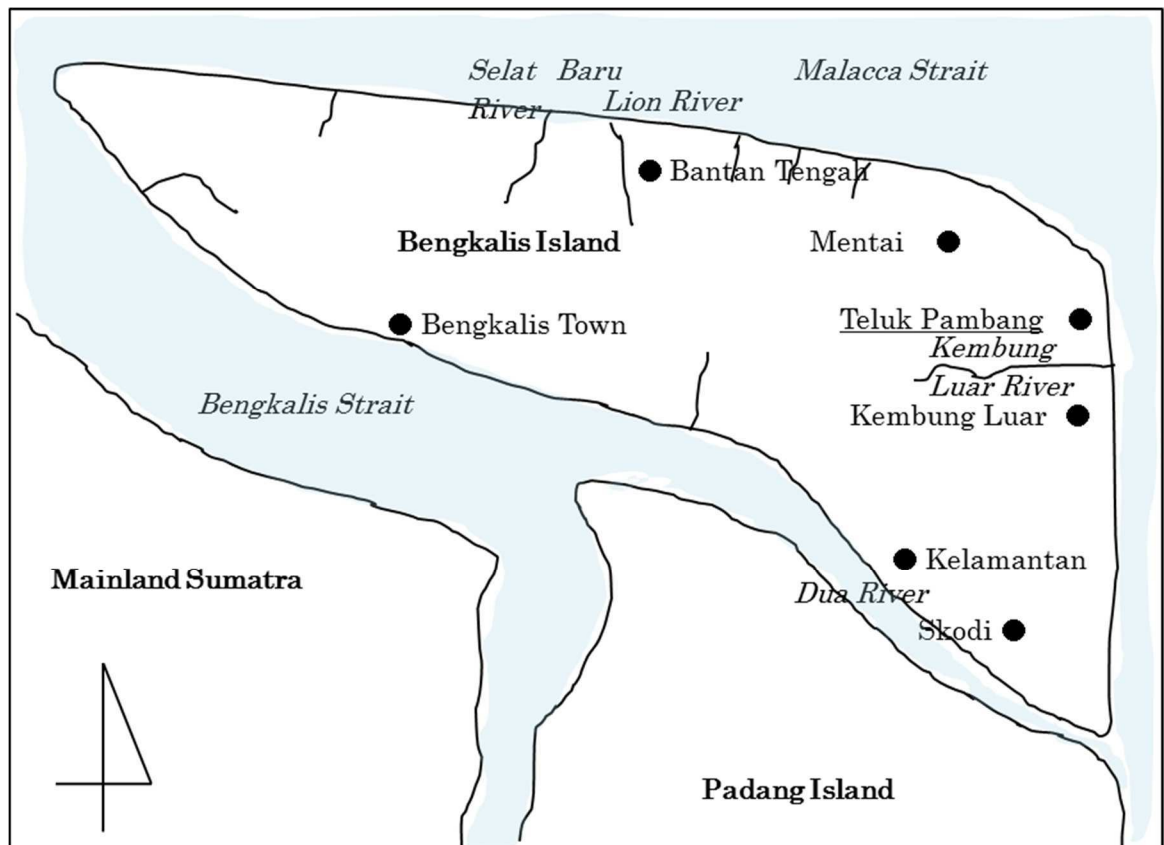
As I mentioned in previous chapters, the Suku Asli have lived on river banks and depended on the resources obtained around coastal space; their attachment to the space constitutes an important part of their identity. However, if we examine my informants’ words, most of them have not recognised mangrove swamps, from which they have obtained their livelihood, as their ancestral land. Rather, as they have naturally used the resources in the ‘niche’ space, their connection with mangrove swamps was a subjective and unconscious one, in which they did not objectify the river-bank space as ancestral. However, through the competition with outsiders, and their interactions with the state, some Suku Asli, especially the leaders of the IKBBSA, have begun to claim the right to river-bank space in very recent years. In this activity, they define the river coast space as ‘ancestral land’. In other words, ‘ancestral land’ emerges through the competition with other peoples and the state as well as the rise of indigenous movements.

In this chapter, I explore Suku Asli recognition of their relationship with their living space and the way it has changed in the state intervention and competition with outsiders through the ethnographic and historical description of the village of Teluk Pambang. First, I describe the geographic and demographic settings of Bengkalis Island and provide a history of Teluk Pambang. Second, I explore Suku Asli perception of their living space, reconstituting the situation before the 1960s and the change caused by the deforestation programme between the 1960s and 1990s. Third, I describe their claim to tidal mangrove forest as ancestral lands in very recent years and analyse its implications. Although the connection between the Suku Asli and their living space was unconscious and subjective until very recently, they began objectifying it as ancestral space through competition with outsiders, which reinforced a collective identity and social consolidation among the Suku Asli.

Bengkalis Island and Teluk Pambang

The demographic and geographic settings of Bengkalis Island

Bengkalis Island is situated at the estuary of the Siak River on the eastern coast of Sumatra (see Map 1). The island has an area of 938 square kilometres and a population of 111,660 people according to the 2013 census (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Bengkalis 2013). The lands are flat and marshy; the highest altitude is only as high as several metres. Bengkalis town (see Map 2) is the largest town on the island and the capital of Bengkalis regency which involves a part of mainland Sumatra and other islands.



Map 2. Bengkalis Island

This island experienced a dramatic increase in population during the last one hundred years. In the pre-colonial era, the coasts of the Malacca Strait were mostly an unpopulated area (T. Barnard 2003: 15). Then, in the late nineteenth century, many ethnic Chinese migrated to the eastern coast of Sumatra for harvesting timber.

Then, around the beginning of the twentieth century, central Sumatra became a main in-migrant region from other areas in Sumatra and Java (Gooszen 1999: 83), and the population of Bengkalis Island would also have increased as it was the political and economic centre of the eastern coast. According to the census conducted by the Dutch colonial government in 1930, the population in Bengkalis Island was 17,035 people (Tideman 1935: 31). Then, about forty years later, the Indonesian 1971 census shows 57,154 people (Kantor Sensus & Statistik Propinsi 1972: 49). As the present population is about a hundred thousand people, the population on the island increased about seven times during the last eighty years.

In accordance with the expansion of population, the landscape of this island has dramatically changed. Before the twentieth century, the hinterlands were covered by thick rainforest. There were a number of brackish rivers, each of which had numerous tributaries. The coasts were covered by thick mangrove forests, and the water paths looked like labyrinths. Although there was a proto-hamlet of the present Bengkalis town and some settlements on the northern coasts of Bengkalis Island, they were small and sparse. In particular, the eastern coast of the island was an unpopulated area, and there were a few settlements of the Utan and Malays. In this situation, people exclusively depended on transportations by water and villages were developed along the coasts as with other villages in eastern Sumatra (Kathirithamby-Wells 1993). At first, a proto-hamlet was formed at a sea or river coast. Then, the hamlet gradually encroached on the hinterlands and became a village. Finally, such villages were connected with roads. On the island, the roads were gradually constructed after the independence of Indonesia.

As a result of the construction of roads and the increase of the population, almost all hinterlands of the island have been already opened and used for gardens and settlements. The lands are used for well-maintained gardens of coconuts and oil palms, rubber and so on. As much of the land is covered with thick tropical peat, it is not suitable for cultivating crops. The lands are possessed legally by individuals, organisations or the government. There remain almost no forests on the island, unlike anywhere else in Indonesia, where the government nominally and legally possesses most of the vast forests based on the national forest laws while local communities have traditionally only used its resources. Even though there are some forests around

the boundaries of the administrative villages, they are as broad as a few hectares and possessed by individuals or logging groups that are established in each administrative village. Each village is connected by paved roads; the houses stand at intervals of several dozen metres along the roads. While some villages are bounded by rivers, their borderlines are generally vague. On the other hand, most mangrove forests which cover the river and sea coasts still remain. These areas are tidal swamps, and it is impossible to use them as farmland. These swamps have claimed by the state in law. However, in practice, the local communities have used the land and resources.

It is quite important for understanding the local perception of space to know that this region has two landscapes of hinterland and waterline. On the maps, the two spaces look directly connected, and their boundaries are extremely vague. However, they are separate and different landscapes in reality. When going through the roads, we cannot perceive the sea and rivers despite their closeness, because the view is restricted by garden trees and mangrove forests. On the other hand, it is also impossible to view the hinterland from the sea and rivers, as the coasts are covered by mangrove forests. In this situation, people have a mind map that is based on the two poles of '*laut*' (sea or water line) and '*darat*' (land). The category of *darat* literally indicates land, while that of *laut* includes the sea, rivers and mangrove forests. Their boundary is the tidemark line. The local Malays often indicate the direction with the two expressions and recognise the cosmological difference of the two spaces.³³ Suku Asli also have the same perception and idioms.

The history of Teluk Pambang and the difference of living space

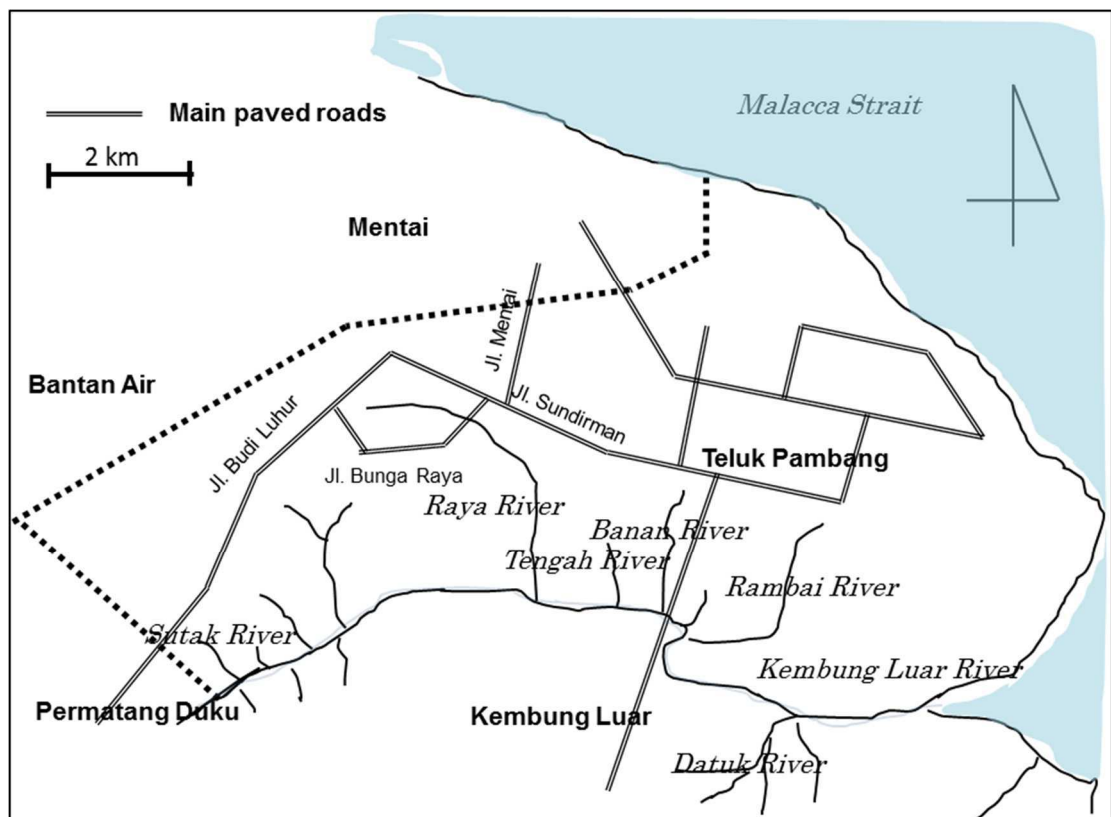
The administrative village of Teluk Pambang is situated at the eastern edge of the island, about forty kilometres distant from Bengkalis town.³⁴ The village has an area of 42 square kilometres and a population of 6,050 people. According to the

³³ The cosmological order based on the binary relationship between '*laut*' and '*darat*' is also general among the Malays in Malaysia (see Endicott 1970).

³⁴ At the end of 2012, which was the end of my fieldwork, the village of Teluk Pambang was divided into three different administrative villages, in which the western part of Teluk Pambang, which was my main field, became a new village of Suka Maju. As the new village did not have any administrative function during my fieldwork, I describe the situation of Teluk Pambang in this thesis (see also the Conclusion).

government census in 2010, the population of the Suku Asli in this village is 1,769 people (346 households) (Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Bengkalis 2010: 225). The majority of the population is made up first of Javanese, and second of Malays and Suku Asli; there are also a few dozen houses of others such as the Minangkabau, Batak and ethnic Chinese.

This village was developed around the north coast of Kembung Luar River (see Map 3). In the nineteenth century, there were some small settlements of the Suku Asli and Malays on both banks of the river, and the government would have regarded these settlements as the administrative village of Kembung. Then, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the settlements of the northern coast were separated from Kembung, and Teluk Pambang was established. According to the villagers, the first people who lived in this area were the Suku Asli. Then, the Malays and Javanese established their settlements in this area.



Map 3. Village of Teluk Pambang

It is uncertain when the Utan first entered Bengkalis Island. However, Suku Asli villagers estimated that it was around the turn of the nineteenth century. Given the

genealogies of their *batin* headman, which they remember fragmentarily, it is certain that there was an Utan community on the island at the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to them, they moved to this island from the Rawa region on mainland Sumatra going through the eastern islands of Padang and Merbau, as I mentioned in previous chapters (see Map 1). The first settlement was around the present Sekodi village (see Map 2). Then, some of the people moved to around the mouth of Kambung Luar River, and made up the first settlement around Rambai River, a tributary of Kambung Luar River (see Map 3).

From the very early period of their move to this area, Chinese traders from Melaka and, later, Singapore often visited for trading.³⁵ Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the population of the Chinese dramatically increased because of the introduction of the *panglong* system. After the Javanese migrants increased around the turn of the twentieth century, their main settlement was moved to around the tributaries of the midstream of Kambung Luar River, the space between the Banan and Raya Rivers (see Map 3).

Just after Suku Asli immigration, the Malays also set up their community in the northeast seashore of present-day Teluk Pambang. They were fishermen who had lived in Rangsang Island and moved to this island to seek new fishing grounds. They conducted fishing in the Malacca Strait. As their settlement was a typical fishing village, it expanded along the sea coasts rather than the hinterland or river coasts.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the first Javanese immigration occurred. These Javanese were those who had immigrated into Malaysia in the early colonial period from Java and moved into this region for the purpose of possessing their own gardens.³⁶ They first settled around Rambai River, and deforested the hinterlands bringing their families to this area from Malaysia. In 1903, the first administrative headman (*penghulu*) was appointed by the Dutch colonial government, and the village of Teluk Pambang was established. The headman was a Javanese, and his office was situated at the north of the Rambai River. This area has been the centre of

³⁵ It is also unknown when the ethnic Chinese first entered this region. Some Suku Asli informants told me that the households of *peranakan* or the Chinese had already been involved with the first Suku Asli migrants; but some not. If involved, Chinese traders who pursued forest products would have been the main agent of Suku Asli immigration to this region.

³⁶ The Dutch colonial government resettled the Javanese for the purpose of ensuring workforces in plantations (Li 2007b: 39-40).

the administrative village. This immigration continued intermittently for several dozen years, and people's gardens were rapidly extended to the hinterlands towards the north and the west. Their interests were mainly in the hinterland because gardens close to river or the sea were often damaged by brackish water.

Around the Japanese occupation in the 1940s, a log plant was established at the meeting point of Raya River and Kembung Luar River, and a canning plant to process fish was also constructed in the Malay settlement. These plants were operated by *touke*. For the purpose of managing the plants, a dozen Chinese households moved to each area from towns on other islands.

After the independence of Indonesia, the regency government tried to open the hinterlands. In the second half of the 1960s, the government carried out a project that deforested the west part of the village, and constructed a path which connects the village with Permatan Duku. In the late 1970s, a path which connects the village with Mentai was also built. These projects were conducted in the ways that the government solicited for the local people to engage in construction and deforestation, and granted them lands for gardens and residences. In parallel with the construction and deforestation, the second Javanese immigration to this village took place after the 1970s. These Javanese were people who applied for the resettlement programme led by the government. By the second half of the 1990s, these paths were gradually paved, and almost all areas of the village were deforested and changed into gardens.

From the village history of Teluk Pambang, we can see the different perspectives on the landscape among the Malays, Javanese and Suku Asli. The Malays 'saw' the fishing ground in the open sea, and they established their settlement along the seashores engaging in open-sea fishing. They were not interested in hinterlands and brackish rivers which were far from the harbours for their boats. The Javanese 'saw' the hinterland forest as potential gardens, and extended their settlements to the hinterlands to create coconuts gardens. They avoided the river or sea banks because of the brackish water. On the other hand, as explored below, the Suku Asli 'saw' the mangrove coasts, and lived in the space between the tidal mangrove forest and hinterland rainforest. The open sea and hinterlands were the outside world for them although they occasionally passed through these spaces for the purpose of transportation and hunting. That is to say, the Malays oriented their cultural

landscape towards the sea, the Javanese towards the hinterlands, and the Suku Asli towards the rivers. Each did not encroach on the different landscapes of the others, as the economic basis of their lives was established in a particular space.

In the early days of the Javanese first migration, there would have been some tensions and negotiations between some Suku Asli and the Javanese. While the details of the conflicts have not been handed down to present-day villagers, according to Suku Asli, some families of the Suku Asli lived on the banks when the Javanese first immigrated. The families moved to the midstream Kambung Luar River, but they maintained their small gardens of coconuts and durian trees. However, these gardens were subsumed by the Javanese gardens or settlements without any compensation. Although violence would not have occurred, some Suku Asli still argue that Rambai River was their space.

However, this was an exceptional case in the early days. Because of the difference of their cultural landscapes and low-population density, the living spaces were not really in competition until the 1960s. The Suku Asli have lived in the midstream Kambung Luar River, the Javanese on the bank of Rambai River and the hinterland, and the Malays on the north-eastern seashore. Each settlement was separated by thick rainforest, mangrove forest and rivers or the sea, so they were rarely involved in land conflicts or competition.

Here, it is noteworthy how the government has seen the land in this region. The landscape perception of the post-independence government almost corresponded with that of the Javanese. The second Javanese immigration resettlement, sponsored by the government, was in government development schemes. The resettlement was, first, programmed to fill the space which the government regarded as 'empty'. Second, the government aimed to improve local economies by providing the local population with progressive, diligent and effective models of sedentary Javanese agriculture (Duncan 2004b: 105; Li 2007b: 80). In short, the government's ideal landscape in this region was co-extensive with the effectively concentrated, well-connected and harmonious agricultural villages, which are represented in the rice-producing areas of Java (SKEPHI & Kiddell-Monroe 1993: 247; see also Geertz 1963). While similar transmigrations have been conducted elsewhere in Indonesia and often caused serious conflicts between the settlers and the indigenous

communities (Duncan 2004b: 104-5), the resettlement to Bengkalis Island had not brought about any violence. Almost all hinterlands effectively changed into well-maintained gardens and villages. Also, some of the Malays who depended on fishing obtained gardens in the hinterlands and became farmers. They often intermarry with the Javanese, and their ethnic boundary is vague at present.

Yet, in the government landscape, the coasts of labyrinthine rivers are peripheral. In the 'blueprint of development' for the Sakai, Akit and Suku Asli, the Bengkalis regency government repeatedly implies that their poverty is derived from their way of living on river banks (Dinas Sosial Kabupaten Bengkalis 2010). The separation of the cultural landscapes between the Javanese, Malays and Suku Asli and the difference in the meaning attached by the government to the spaces reconfigures the Suku Asli's marginal position in terms of space within the state. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the Suku Asli living place has not been geographically isolated if compared with other tribespeople in Southeast Asia. However, even after independence, they have actually been isolated politically in the narrow but complex space characterised by numerous tributaries and tidal mangrove forests. The government development scheme of landscape centring on hinterland gardens formulated and maintained the marginal position of the Suku Asli.

Suku Asli recognition of the river coastal space

The past way of life and economic dependency on river-coast resources

Let us explore Suku Asli's relationship with the river coasts in detail. During my fieldwork, I often asked Suku Asli elders about their memories of their past life. I talked with them sitting on benches at the front of their houses or taking chairs under tents that were prepared for ceremonies in their gardens. In most cases, the elders gladly chatted about their past foraging ways of life with nostalgia, and taught me a lot of things about their ways of looking for food, building houses and communication between people in the coastal area. However, such information was often confusing, because the scenes in their stories seemed to be remote from present

village situations. At present, Suku Asli houses in Teluk Pambang are scattered along the paved roads near to rivers, and their transportation depends on the road. Almost all of them settle in ‘semi-permanent houses’ made of boards and timbers, according to the government categorisation. Noticing the perplexed look on my face, they stressed: ‘There did not used to be so many people as there are now’. Following their words, I erased roads, lanes, gardens, and most houses in front of us from my mind, replaced them with forests, and tried to imagine their past ways of life. As a result, their past life largely dependent on the waterline emerged little by little. The following descriptions are ones that I formulated from the information given by the elders. Although it is difficult to specify a concrete time period for their stories, these ways of life and landscape were generally in existence before the 1960s.

In the past, there were no roads and gardens and fewer people; the lands were covered by forest. There were very few houses in Teluk Pambang, and the Suku Asli lived in settlements with only two or three huts assembled together. A husband, wife and their children lived in each small hut. Trunks of *bakau*³⁷ were used for the pillars³⁸ of the hut. The frames were also *bakau*, and they were joined together by strings made of bark. The roof was thatched with the leaves of nipa palm (*nipah*) or sago palm. For the floor, the trunks of nibung palm (*nibung*) were arranged on the *bakau* frames, or people just trod on the soil so as to harden it. The wall was made of some kind of bark. The spaces around the huts were cleared, and people made small gardens planting tubers (*ubi*). They may also have planted durian and coconut palms.

These settlements dotted the spaces behind the mangrove forests along the tributaries of the Kembung Luar River. Between settlements, there were dense mangrove forests, swamps, rainforests and canals. Although there may have been trails between them in some parts, they usually used canoes to go back and forth between the settlements. Each settlement was called by the name of the tributary, such as Sungai Raya (Raya River and so forth), Sungai Banan and Sungai Tengah. At the headstream of the tributary and meeting point of the rivers, they enshrined the

³⁷ *Bakau* is a kind of mangrove tree. The English term ‘mangrove’ is used for indicating various plants and vegetation growing in tidal forests (Giesen et al 2006/2007: 1). However, the locals distinguish each species. *Bakau* indicates a species of the *Rhizophoraceae* family. In the Kembung Luar River, *bakau putih*, or *Rhizophora apiculata*, is dominant.

³⁸ The trunk of the young *bakau* is a straight pole 5- 6 centimetres in diameter. If one cuts down its branches and thrusts it into the ground, it pierces the tropical peat a few metres in depth and become a stable pier.

local spirits (*datuk*) to protect the place by setting up a stand on which they offered food for the spirits. This place was thought of as *keramat*, and a *dukun* managed each *keramat* place by holding annual rituals.

The most important food was sago, in addition to tubers planted around huts. People harvested sago palms (*meriyah*) that grew naturally between mangrove swamps and hinterland rainforests. They extracted carbohydrates (*sagu*; *sago*) from it and preserved them in their houses. They often gathered shellfish in mangrove swamps as well. Game, in particular wild boar (*hisim*; *nagoi*), was also an important food. However, they rarely went hunting in the rainforest of the hinterland (*dalam utan*; *dalam*). Because wild boars often came down to the edges of the rainforest close to their settlements and the mangrove swamps, they just hunted them with spears and snares around their settlements. They ate the sago and tubers together with fish and the various shellfish obtained around the rivers. Each household had a dugout canoe (*jalor*) or a boat (*sampan*),³⁹ and they conducted fishing and transportation using it. The canoe, which was handled with two sculling oars, was an essential tool that was used every day.

They traded various forest and coastal products such as rattan (*rotan*), wild rubber (*guta sondek*), screw-pines and fish with *touke*. However, the most important product was the trunks of *bakau*. The manner of trade involved going to the *touke*'s house and arranging to exchange it for commodities such as iron products, fishing gears, clothes, rice, salt, sugar, tobacco and money. Then, they promised the *touke* to bring a certain amount of *bakau* by a certain date. During high water, they went into the mangrove forest using canoes and logged the trunks. *Touke* created charcoal from *bakau* in their charcoal huts, and exported it to Singapore and Melaka. According to old Suku Asli informants, their fathers and grandfathers had also worked in the logging of *bakau* with *touke*, and the logging of *bakau* was the main waged labour for them until 2006.

They often moved around. A household lived in a settlement for as long as a few years then moved to a different settlement or unoccupied land. If they found a 'good

³⁹ *Jalor* is a dugout canoe that is 3- 4 metres in length. They could make it on their own using axes and adzes. On the other hand, *sampan* is a boat which is made by putting planking together (4- 5 metres in length). Suku Asli bought it from Malay, Chinese, or Suku Asli villagers who had skills to build it. At present, *jalor* has already disappeared and *sampan* are used in general. Suku Asli handle these boats with two sculling oars standing at the front or back.

place' (*tempat bagus*) for living when away from their settlement, they moved to the new place. The move was often within a narrow space; they may have moved to the banks of the next tributary using canoes. The old land was often just abandoned. However, when the new residence was near and they had planted durian or coconut trees in the small garden in the old place, they may have returned to harvest them. People who wanted to move to the old place paid some money for the trees (*ganti rugi*) and could move there. On the other hand, they occasionally moved to distant places outside the Kembung Luar River or Bengkalis Island relying on connections with kinsmen and friends, as I mentioned in previous chapters. There were a number of similar settlements in the region between Rupert Island and Mendol Island. If people moved to a different community, they met the *batin* headman of the new place and reported that they would like to live in the place for a while; they gained their livelihoods by mangrove logging or temporary labours under *touke*. Some may have moved again soon, and some may have lived around the same place throughout their life.

In the memories of their past life, we can see Suku Asli dependency on the resources of the brackish river coasts. Their building materials of *bakau*, *nipa* and *nibung* grow in a zone between tidal mangrove forest and hinterland rainforest (Giesen *et al.* 2006/2007). The staple food, sago palm, also grows in this space. In addition, the most important commodity, *bakau*, develops in tidal forests under certain water salinity and less in coastal areas facing the open sea (Giesen *et al.* 2006/2007: 12-15). However, the environment in mangrove swamps itself is very harsh for living, because of the difficulty of obtaining fresh water, the undulations of the land surface caused by ebb and flow, and the astonishingly large numbers of mosquitoes, so they did not actually live in the tidal forest. Yet, hinterlands were inconvenient for transportation and obtaining resources. As a result, their settlements have been concentrated on the space behind mangrove forests in the midstream and upstream areas of brackish rivers.



Photograph 5. A canoe and Raya River



Photograph 6. A house of the Suku Asli (Raya River)

At present, their houses are made of plank walls and tin or sago-leaves roofs, their transportation mostly depends on the roads, and they more frequently eat rice as staple food. Also, as the land ownership is fixed, they move to the different places less frequently. However, they still fish on the brackish river, hunt wild boars in mangrove swamps, grow sago palm in their gardens and log mangrove timber with canoes when a *touke* requests it.

Unconscious attachment to river-coast space as 'indigeny'

Although their economic dependency on river banks in their history is obvious, Suku Asli do not concretely manifest their attachment to the space in their words. One day, I tried to scrutinise their relationship with a living place and asked Pak Koding about what constituted a 'good place' for living in when they had moved frequently. I expected that he would show a clear attachment to the coastal space with an explanation to do with the riches of resources, kin or ancestral relationships with the land, or the ancestral monuments or territory represented by graves and *keramat* places. However, he looked slightly perplexed and thought for a little bit before answering, 'It was just doing as one likes (*yang suka saja*).' He continued 'If we found a "good place" while walking around (*jalan-jalan*), we moved and lived in the place. If we had good friends, we also moved to and lived in the place.' I tried to grasp their preferences for location, and asked him 'How about living in the hinterland forests?' He answered 'No, it's far from the river (*jauh dari laut*), difficult to live'. I continued 'How about living in banks facing the open sea?' He said 'It's okay. But strong winds and waves shake our canoes. It's terrifying. I do not want to live there.' In addition, I asked: 'Do you prefer to live near to the family houses?' He replied: 'If the person wants to do so, it's okay. But it is not necessary to do so.' His conclusion was that: 'In the past, there were much fewer people around here. People did as they liked.'

From Koding's comment, it is certain that they have always chosen space near to the brackish rivers as their living space. As Pak Koding presented it, they have not preferred to live in the hinterland or sea banks because they regard such places as

‘difficult to live in’. Indeed, as explained below, while they obtained gardens in the hinterland between the 1970s and 1990s, they did not move there to live and, even though the mangrove swamps largely lost their economic value after 2006, they have still lived around coastal spaces. Furthermore, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, for the Suku Asli, living near river coasts and engaging in mangrove logging is one of the most important criterion in distinguishing *orang asli* from others. They have a clear image that the Suku Asli have lived in the environment near the rivers and utilised resources. This means they have a clear attachment to the river-coast space.

On the other hand, Pak Koding stressed the existence of ‘friends’. Friendship is established by living together and sharing food, and friends may often be categorised as kinsmen because the Suku Asli share a vague memory that they had the same ancestors and may extend this category through the idea of bilateral kin relations (see Chapter 2). However, what he emphasised in the word ‘friend’ was that consanguineous closeness or kin categorisations are not so important for their choices of where to live. If they establish a good relationship with other people (usually the Rawa, Akit and ethnic Chinese; see Chapter 2), they may move to their place. On the other hand, even if near rivers, they do not live in the settlements of the Javanese and Malays, with whom it is relatively difficult to share food and intermarry. According to Pak Koding, they felt ‘fear (*takut*)’ and ‘shame (*malu*)’ at the prospect of communicating with such outsiders.

Peter Gow (1995) describes how the people of the Bajo Urubamba in Peru see kinship in their lands. Past relations, especially through the production and exchange of food, constitute kinship between the people. They recognise the extension of their space beyond the horizon by mentioning the kinsmen living in a distant place, although the space is separated by the forests. They also remember the history of the land well and who occupied it in the past. He concludes that people recognise space reflecting the social relationships in it. The Suku Asli see social relationships in the coastal area in quite a similar way.

However, Pak Koding did not give any concrete explanation of their connection with the land. They have moved to, and lived in places where they did not always have an ancestral connection. In my research, I tried to find a pattern of the present distribution of Suku Asli houses connecting them with resources and ‘religious’

monuments. However, I could not find any obvious patterns except for the fact that they have lived on river banks where the Javanese and Malays did not live. They utilised the resources of mangrove swamps anywhere they could access them. Some houses were built near to those of kinsmen, but many houses were not. They did not stick to particular distances from ancestral *keramat* or graves. Other informants also expressed the reason for their choice of living space in expressions similar to: 'It is just doing what one likes.' However, given their profound dependence on the coastal resources and their avoidance of other spaces, it is certain that they have a strong attachment to river-coast space.

In the Suku Asli way of choosing living space, we can see their 'indigeny' in river coast space – that is, unconscious and subjective attachment to the space. However, this is slightly different from Benjamin's definition which emphasises linkages between people and a concrete place (2002: 15; 2012). For the Suku Asli, their attachment is not limited to a concrete place but to the river-coast environment itself. For them, river coasts were naturally their space, in which they could obtain resources and move to different distant river coasts frequently. River-coast space was less competitive, and they did not need to objectify and specify the reason why they should live in such space.

Some studies of forest dwellers have tried to represent the people's unconscious and subjective attachments to forest by describing cosmological or mythical mutual implications between people and forest. Lye Tuck-Po (2005) points out that the Batek, hunter-gatherers in the Malay Peninsula, are 'looking after' the forest. In their cosmology, the Batek are the essential agents in the care of the forest playing the role of its 'guardianship', and if the people left the forest, the world would collapse. She concludes by seeing the forest as necessarily implicated in social existence. Tenas Effendy (2002) explains the cosmology of the Petalangan, swidden cultivators in inland Riau in a similar manner. For them, a tree, which is the essential component of the forest, and the human body are entwined in a mutually metaphorical relationship, and so they take great care to protect the forest environment. Cynthia Chou (2010: 90-95) also points out a similar cosmology in the Petalangan among the Orang Laut in Riau-Lingga archipelago. However, Suku Asli have neither a clear explanation of their attachment to the coastal space nor any myth or cosmological

explanation in terms of their implication with the coastal forest, unlike the Batek or Petalangan. Although I cannot give an obvious reason for their lack of cosmological attachment to the mangrove forest, it could reflect their connection with ‘outsiders’. First, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, the *peranakan* Suku Asli have as the ancestors Chinese labourers who came to this region for harvesting timbers. For them, the mangrove forest was a commodity. Because of this kind of relationship, the Utan might have lost the implied connections between human beings and the forest. Second, as mentioned above, they frequently moved to distant coastal communities and did not settle in a particular place.

There is a sequel to the conversation with Pak Koding. Some days later, when I talked with him about shamanic techniques, he said to me: ‘I remembered that there is an important reason to choose a “good place” for living.’ He continued, ‘The important thing is whether the place is occupied by the “people” or not.’ This ‘people’ does not refer to humans, but a kind of spirit, i.e., *orang* or *orang bunyian* (people; people of sounds). These ‘people’ are invisible and walk about the forests, the rivers, settlements and other places. Although they are usually neither benevolent nor malevolent to human beings, if houses are built on their paths, they get angry and cause illness and misfortune to the family. *Dukun* can communicate and negotiate with them supported by the local spirits which have authority over them. Ordinary people can also communicate with such spirits in their dreams. If they found that a new place was occupied by the ‘people’, they moved to some other place. These ‘people’ are not fixed at particular places and moved around the same way as the Suku Asli.

On the other hand, the Suku Asli did not depend on the resources of the hinterland forests. They only used the land when they passed through it or for occasional hunting. However, it was the hinterland rainforest that became the first kind of place/space which the Suku Asli objectified and demonstrated their relationship to. As a result of their adoption of outsiders’ images on the linkage between people and land, they started to manifest attachment to the hinterland space more early and clearly than to the coastal space.

Connecting land and people

Participation in deforestation

After the 1940s, the population around the Raya River increased dramatically. When the log plant was established on its banks, many Suku Asli engaged in the logging and transportation of timbers under the management of ethnic Chinese. At the end of the 1960s, the land on the shores of the Raya River became insufficient. Some Suku Asli began opening the hinterlands to the west of the river. Some moved to the upper reaches of the Kambung Luar River. In the government deforestation and construction projects in the 1960s, Suku Asli also joined together with the Javanese. They opened the forests and legally received lands along the present path of Jl. Budi Luhur (see Map 3). In around 1970, Suku Asli established an agricultural group, the Pondok Condong, and asked the Javanese administrative headman to allow them to open the western hinterland of Jl. Budi Luhur in order to create gardens. At this time, eighty Suku Asli households joined the group, and they cleared about 300 hectares of the forest and distributed the lands to its members. In the late 1990s, a new Suku Asli organisation called OPSA (*Organisasi Pemuda Suku Asli*; Suku Asli Youth Organisation; see also Chapter 4) was established by Pak Ajui. They cleared 200 hectares of the forest at the village boundary with Bantan Air.

However, the gardens have not become the main sources of their livelihood. According to them, they wanted to gain their livelihood from the gardens, and, at first, they planted seedlings of coconuts and rubber. Yet, it took several years until they were able to harvest them. Therefore, they did not move to the gardens from their houses near the rivers where they had historically gained their livelihood, but went to the gardens, several kilometres distant from their houses, to work on a daily basis. However, it gradually became more difficult to go and work every day, and they eventually sold the gardens to outsiders. This process had another significance in terms of the national law. Although the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960 set forth the right of individual land possession, the right was legitimised only for gardens or fields that were well maintained. If the land returned to the forest, the state could claim its ownership once again (Acciaioli 2007: 312). Therefore, the Suku Asli had

only two choices: either they cultivated the gardens continuously with tremendous effort or just sold them.

Most of the new gardens were sold to outsiders. A large part of lands opened in the regency government project in the 1960s were sold to the Javanese who came to the village in the second wave of immigration just after the project. The situation of deforestation led by the Pondok Condong was relatively complex. This would have been conducted according to the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960⁴⁰, which partly recognised customary land rights of the forest (SKEPHI & Kiddell-Monroe 1993: 236-237). On the basis of the law, the administrative village headman in this village would have allowed groups, which manifested '*adat* community', to possess parts of the forest for the purpose of making gardens. Some Javanese groups were established and began applying for land titles to the forest. The Suku Asli also tried to obtain land titles in this situation. They promised the village headman not to sell the opened land to outsiders from '*adat* community', and dealings within their community were permitted only when all the members agreed to it. But, eventually, most parts of the land were sold. In most cases, the lands were sold to the ethnic Chinese living in Bengkalis town who wanted to possess more gardens. The Suku Asli regarded the ethnic Chinese as 'the same ethnic group' (*sukunya sama*) in these dealings, and they persuaded the village headman as well as the group members.⁴¹

On the other hand, most lands opened by the OPSA in the late 1990s are still possessed by Suku Asli. While some well-off Suku Asli have bought the lands from other Suku Asli to extend their gardens, these were dealings between members. By the second half of the 1990s, the roads were almost all paved, many people obtained motorbikes to go to the gardens from their coastal settlement, and their access to the lands became much easier than before. However, the majority have been not used in productive ways as gardens. Although they sometimes attended to the land, maintained the ditches as boundaries of the lands, and killed the weeds, quite a few of the landholders did not harvest the rubber and oil palms planted previously. The

⁴⁰ The Basic Forestry Law of 1967 states that all forests are possessed by the state, in contrast to the Basic Agrarian Law (SKEPHI & Kiddell-Monroe 1993). Although I could not confirm the detailed legal processes of how the lands in Bengkalis Island were treated then, the Agrarian Law would have been applied to this area as the people obtained the lands with legitimate documents.

⁴¹ Suku Asli basically regard the ethnic Chinese living in towns as outsiders. Therefore, this could be seen as the instrumental deployment of ethnic boundary (see also Chapter 2).

land thus does not return to forest but to bush. They deride such lands and ashamedly call them ‘man-made forest (*utan buatan*)’, which implies an ambivalent situation for the landholder; although one has opened the lands for growing coconuts or rubber with much effort and government permission, one appears only to grow bush on the land.



Photograph 7. ‘Man-made forest’ in Teluk Pambang

These deforestations were always conducted under the supervision of the government, and the Suku Asli have wholly legal ownership of the land. According to Graeme MacRae (2003: 159), land can be a commodity under legal registration. He points out that the legal title to lands changes inalienable land to a commodity, for the title casts off the land from customary restraints on alienation. Furthermore, for the Suku Asli, the new gardens were not customary lands. Therefore, Suku Asli appear to be dealing with the forest as a commodity. However, Nicolas Long (2009: 80-81) points out that, even if legal titles are fixed, lands can neither wholly become a capitalist commodity nor become free from ‘the webs of social relationships and

cultural logics'. Indeed, the gardens sold were involved in the webs of social relations and the cultural logics of Suku Asli.

Lands as kinship in the future: 'For children and grandchildren'

One day, sitting on benches in front of his house as usual, I talked with Pak Koding about the history of the village. I asked him, as one of the three leaders of the Pandak Condong, the reason why he organised the agricultural group and led the deforestation of the hinterland. For me, it was slightly strange that they opened gardens that were not always necessary for them and, indeed, were then sold. He told me that the deforestation was 'for their children and grandchildren' (*untuk anak cucu*). He continued 'People increased, and it was necessary to make sure of the lands where our children and grandchildren would live.' I questioned him 'Why were such lands sold to others?' He also sold most of the land he had opened in the government project through the activity of Pondak Condong. His face, with a genial look until then, hardened, and he stated:

The lands were sold not for money for cigarettes or playing (*uang rokok*). [...] The lands were sold for preparing money for our children's education, building houses and buying motorbikes and medicine for children. Everyone is the same.

Then, our topic of conversation returned to the history of the village. However, after a momentary pause, he suddenly stressed the comment again, 'The lands were sold for our children and grandchildren. For preparing money for our children's education and to buy their medicine, we sold the land' he said with a somewhat elegiac look on his face.

Opening forest 'for children and grandchildren' is not Koding's improvisational expression. The phrase was used for negotiating with the Javanese headman in the 1960s, and, indeed, Suku Asli registered the newly opened lands with the names of children and grandchildren. The Javanese village headman, who then allowed the Pondak Condong to open the hinterlands, remembered the words: 'As they told me that they want to open the land for their children and grandchildren, I allowed them

to do it.’ For the village headman, the discourse ‘for children and grandchildren’ fitted with the legal regulations, which recognised the customary rights to land, as well as his feeling as a Javanese about the land and its importance. In this sense, this idea of ‘for children and grandchildren’ could be seen as being moulded by a hegemonic relationship between Suku Asli and the Javanese or the government.

However, the idea is not just an imposed one. It also fitted with the Suku Asli idea of ‘children and grandchildren’ based on their agency, and was used for integrating the members of the Pondok Condong. For Suku Asli, descendants including ‘children and grandchildren’ are not only those who are loved and cared for but also those who will take care of them in the future through rituals. The Suku Asli are obligated to offer food to their ancestral spirits in periodic rituals (see Chapter 2). At the same time, it is an obligation to have and guard descendants who will feed them in the future, and to ensure their livelihoods. Although every Suku Asli more or less shares this feeling, this is much stronger among the *peranakan* Suku Asli than among ‘real’ Suku Asli. The *peranakan* Suku Asli have maintained their strong relationship with their ancestors and descendants through their relatively-frequent almost-monthly practices of ancestral rituals in ‘Chinese’ ways. It is not an accident that the three leaders of the Pondok Condong, including Pak Koding, were all *peranakan*.

Despite the descendants and newly opened lands being deeply related, why did they sell the land? It was for the same reason: ‘for children and grandchildren’, according to Pak Koding. Based on this reason, people chose either to sell or preserve cleared lands. A Suku Asli who possessed a ‘man-made forest’ told me that if his two sons, then living together, marry in the village, they would build houses and gardens in the ‘man-made forest’; however, if they left the village, he would sell the land to someone else. Indeed, he had sold a part of the land to an ethnic Chinese living in Bengakalis town when his daughter had married and gone out from the village. His thoughts consistently fit the cultural logic of Suku Asli.

They did not open and sell the land as a commodity. Nor is the productivity of the land for their children and grandchildren necessarily brought about by the land itself. Selling land and buying medicine or sending children to school is also productive. This is more obvious if the land is hard to access. Long (2009) describes

a similar case in an arbitration of land conflict between the Malays and the Batak in the Riau Archipelago. A Malay wife, the husband of whom had the ancestral legal title to an orchard very far from their house, wanted to sell the land to Batak because 'the sale of the land at a time of economic hardship would facilitate her in becoming the mother and grandmother she wanted to be, enabling her to better provide for her family' (2009: 73-74). This shows the importance placed on the value taking care of one's kin in Malay kinship. He concludes: 'The "commodification" of the land was thus not in tension with "customary" Malay practices and values but an alternative means of their actualisation' (2009: 74). For the Suku Asli, selling land was also an 'alternative means of actualisation' of care for their children and grandchildren consistent with their cultural logic. Lands were opened and sold not as simple commodities but as a reflection of their culture and identity.

It is a dilemma that, whereas they have an ideal picture of the cleared land as constituting the livelihood of the descendants, they cannot accomplish it. Therefore, selling land involves some emotional turmoil. Koding's restless attitude in my interview surely represents it, and their cynical attitude to the 'man-made forest' can also be understood in the same context. Identity and land are deeply connected in their world. The fact that they sold their land to the ethnic Chinese can also be understood not only as an expedient for negotiating with the group members or the village headman, but also as a feeble attempt to preserve their social identity, which is attached to the land. By selling the land to the ethnic Chinese, who may be regarded as their kinsmen, they try to keep open the possibility that the social identity attached to the land is maintained. They sell the lands for their children and grandchildren to the ethnic Chinese who are potential kinsmen. Selling the land, which is rather an individual action, can become morally positive and accepted by the society so long as it involves the possibility of maintaining or reproducing their social identity (Bloch & Parry 1989).

The image of land, which emerges in Koding's comments and responses, provides us with quite a different impression from the stories about their past life. According to these stories, they moved around freely without attachments to a specific land. When they moved, they just abandoned the land, or sold only the trees in the land to others. In particular, lands in the hinterland forest were outside their

world. However, in his comments about the opened land, the land seems to be something emotional and concerned with identity. It is connected with their future children and grandchildren. Now, land and people are mutually implicated. Suku Asli landscape has changed.

As a result of the Javanese immigration, land shortage and government interventions, they extended their world to the hinterlands and represented the feelings ‘for children and grandchildren’ by attaching them to the land. Although their past relation to landscape ignored the land itself, their landscape is now characterised by mutual implications between people and land as well as the temporary continuity from the past to the future. Suku Asli see kinship in the opened land. They see their children and grandchildren who will feed them in the future, in the opened hinterlands. Therefore, their relation with the hinterland has changed and this change came about through their relation with outsiders and the state after the 1960s.

New movements in coastal space: Mangrove swamps and ancestors

Although the hinterlands were connected with their descendants and then sold after the 1960s, the change of coastal space where the Suku Asli lived was relatively undramatic. After the first Javanese migration, they began opening the hinterland and did not encroach on the western tributaries from the Banan River to the west of the Raya River. Historically, there were some Javanese households who bought land in this space from the Suku Asli or just moved to empty land; however, they have since moved to the hinterlands. This is because this space was generally less suitable for harvesting coconut or rubber, as the soil often became damaged by brackish water from the tributaries. In addition, it would have been uncomfortable for the Javanese to live in land surrounded by non-Islamic people. Even today, Suku Asli populations have concentrated on the coastal space between the Banan River and the west of the Raya River.

In this situation, the Suku Asli did not explicitly connect with their ancestors and the lands in this space. They have lived in this space from the past to present. They

obtained their main livelihood from the river and mangrove forest, logging mangrove trunks, fishing in the river, cultivating tubers and coconuts in small gardens and gathering sago and shellfish. They rarely sold the lands in this space, and the lands were, indeed, less involved in competition and conflict. For them, this space was naturally their own.

However, this same space began to be actively connected with their ancestors in very recent years in a totally different process from that in the hinterlands. The trigger was not the land where they have lived, but the tidal mangrove forest where they gained their main livelihood in combination with the progress of environmentalism as a fundamental part of the recent political agenda.



Photograph 8. A swamp being washed out and mangrove seedlings (Rambai Raiver)

The encroachment on the river bank and the inflow of brackish water in this space became problematic in Teluk Pambang after the second half of the 1990s. Even before this, the river banks were gradually washed out, and brackish water flowed in gardens near to rivers or the sea at high tide, but the frequency of the inflow gradually increased in recent years, and its baneful influence on the productivity of the gardens became more and more serious. In particular, the gardens around the mouth of the Kambung Luar River, including the banks of the Rambai River, suffered from the serious effects of the floods. The Javanese living around the

Rambai River attributed the main cause to the decrease of mangrove forest in this area. Indeed, the mangrove forest is an important natural bank protection (Giesen *et al.* 2006/2007: 34-35). They began trying to protect the mangrove forest by planting mangrove seedlings, digging ditches in the swamps and restricting the logging of mangrove forests. However, for the Javanese, one of the major obstacles to carrying out this activity was logging of *bakau* by Suku Asli villagers.



Photograph 9. A sign board that shows the ownership of a mangrove forest by a Javanese group of Makmur Bersama (Rambai River)

While the lands of coastal spaces had been divided amongst and legally possessed by individuals, the mangrove swamps, where brackish water flows in everyday, were legally possessed by the government under the national law. In practice, its resources were customarily utilised by the local communities. Suku Asli villagers conducted the logging of *bakau* in this space freely. They went back and forth along the Kembung Luar River by canoes, and obtained the trunks when they found good ones. If they could find good ones, they often entered the Rambai River and conducted logging. In order to stop their logging, the Javanese began applying

for land titles of the mangrove swamps along the Rambai River by organising some logging groups. These applications were accepted by the village headman and the regency offices and the mangrove swamps were given a legal right of possession by the logging groups. They stretched ropes around the swamps, put signs at river banks indicating the group's ownership, and built sentry huts where there was good *bakau* forest. Suku Asli villagers were excluded from these swamps. At the beginning, Suku Asli villagers did not take counter actions, but there were some minor conflicts between them and the Javanese, because some Suku Asli villagers entered the swamps to log. However, they always ran away if they met the Javanese in the forest and no collective action was taken.

In 2003, OPSA applied for the land title of thirty hectares of mangrove swamp along the Raya River. According to Pak Ajui, the head of OPSA, they applied for the title in order to build houses or gardens for their members using the same logic as they had when opening hinterland. They dug ditches in the swamps, distributed the lands to the members, and registered the lands with their children and grandchildren's names. At about this point, his answers became vague. This is because they regard living in mangrove swamps as very difficult and their own houses have always been behind the mangrove forest. Indeed, the mangrove lands were not used for houses and gardens at all. Rather, this had been intended as a counter action against the Javanese. Because of their critical feelings about the possession of swamp by the Javanese, they had tried to resist. They also seemed to have an agenda to ensure their logging space. However, this agenda ended in failure.

After the late 1990s, not a few domestic and foreign researchers visited the island for the purpose of investigating the rich and unique mangrove forests in the area. According to the regency officials in Bengkalis town, the central government ordered the regency government to protect the mangrove environment on this island following the reports submitted by such researchers. In 2006, the regency government stopped renewing the licences of the charcoal huts on this island for exporting charcoal to Singapore and Malaysia.⁴² Although the government still issued licences for charcoal huts that supply the products only for local communities,

⁴² The exportation of the charcoal from other islands, such as Rupert Island and Ransang Island, is still permitted. Therefore, the Suku Asli in eastern islands and the Akit in Rupert still engage in mangrove logging.

this was desperately unprofitable for *touke* who ran large-scale huts and exported the products. Although some *touke* and Suku Asli leaders protested to the government, their complaints were not accepted. Eventually, several charcoal huts along the Kambung Luar River were closed.

This means that Suku Asli villagers lost their main livelihood. During my fieldwork in 2012, Suku Asli villagers seemed to depend less on coastal resources than in their past. Actually, some people now have boats engaged in net fishing and in logging mangrove timbers for building materials. People also go occasionally to the mangrove swamps and gather shellfish. However, the waged labour of rubber and coconut gardens owned by the ethnic Chinese and the Javanese provides them with their main livelihood.⁴³ A part of such gardens were the lands that they had sold in the past. Temporary labour in constructing roads and buildings is also important. On the basis of such labour, they make an income from their own small gardens in which coconuts, rubber and areca nuts are planted. In any case, their transportation is totally dependent on the roads and lanes with the motorbikes that every household uses. As for food, although they plant sago palms in the corners of gardens, they more frequently eat rice that is provided by the government⁴⁴ or bought with their wages.

In addition to closing the charcoal huts, the government continued to facilitate the environment movement to protect the mangrove swamps. During my fieldwork, the government offered many subsidies to a Javanese logging group in Teluk Pambang and encouraged them to plant seedlings of *bakau*. The government also held occasional seminars for logging groups. I attended one of such seminars held at the village of Bantan Air. In the seminar, an official, who had sufficient knowledge of the coastal environment, taught the attendants how important the mangrove trees were for maintaining the coastal environment and how important the coastal environment was for sustaining fishing and agriculture. Some Suku Asli loggers from Selat Baru also attended that meeting.

One day, Pak Ajui told me about a plan to apply for the land title of mangrove swamps around the Raya River to the government. In his plan, several hundred

⁴³ Generally, the Suku Asli receive a half of the proceeds as wage.

⁴⁴ In this support, the government provides free rice for each RW (*Rukun Warga*; neighbourhood association: a political unit under the administrative village) twice a year. This support is not only for Suku Asli villagers, but everyone living in the designated RW.

hectares of mangrove swamps, which cover most parts of the swamps of the Raya River, would be registered for the exclusive land of the OPSA. He would build sentry huts in the forest, and protect the land and the mangroves. I found this plan strange because I knew the swamps divided in 2003 were not used for houses or gardens. It also seemed to be difficult to negotiate with the central government about reopening the charcoal exporting huts. I therefore asked him why he would want to do this. His answer was slightly surprising: 'It is because the mangrove forest is our land. From ancestors, we have possessed it. We have to look after (*jaga*) the land.'

It was the first and only time that I heard a clear claim made in terms of their 'ancestral land'. As mentioned above, ordinary villagers did not always regard the tidal mangrove swamps as their 'ancestral land'. However, Pak Ajui and Suku Asli leaders knew that the post-Suharto government might recognise the possession of a land by an '*adat* community' if people demonstrate their ancestral use of the land. After my fieldwork ended, I confirmed with Pak Ajui that he had actually applied for the ownership of the tidal mangrove swamps, and the government accepted it in 2013.

Although the Suku Asli have had attachments to the coastal space, it was unconscious and subjective. However, after the mangrove swamps become difficult to access because of the Javanese activities, they began trying to designate boundaries in the coastal space, and to connect the space with their ancestors. Porath (2000) describes a Sakai case in mainland Sumatra, in which a burial mound of a Sakai historic hero was 're-appreciated' as ancestral space in the process that they lost much of their space because of an oil-company's encroachment on their forest. While the Suku Asli also have 're-appreciated' their mangrove swamps, I would like to suggest that this process can be seen as the objectification or embodiment of a new way of relating to land in their world. They have objectified the space as ancestral land by adopting the emphasis on '*adat* community' and used it in the competition for space and their interaction with government interventions. As a result, 'ancestral land' as a form of space has emerged in Suku Asli perspective. Their unconscious and subjective attachment to the coastal space, which can be summarised by the term 'indigeny', has transformed into a conscious and objective linkage between the people and the land, on which the outsiders' image is reflected – that is, the emergence of indigeneity in their society.

Space: from transient individuals to enduring social order

As Pak Ajui stated, mangrove swamp was possessed by the OPSA not for selling it or obtain money but for ‘looking after’ it. This means that mangrove swamps became something inalienable, which was inherited from their ancestors. As Karl Marx pointed out, the relationship between people is symbolically embodied in the relationship between persons and things (see Bloch & Parry 1989: 4-6). The relationship between persons and spaces can be included in this context (Benjamin forthcoming). Chou (2010: 76-78) sees the territory of the Orang Laut in the Riau-Lingga Archipelago as the ‘inalienable gifts’ from their ancestors. Maintaining ancestral territories including not only land but also sea routes is deeply rooted in their social identity, and through its maintenance, they reconfigure and reproduce the relationship with their ancestors as well as their future descendants. In so doing, they are demonstrating their territorial rights against recent government infrastructure and building projects along the shore. However, the case of the Suku Asli shows a more dynamic aspect of the relationship between persons and things.

The transformation of the relationship between people and land among the Suku Asli can be seen as a process which aims to construct an enduring, long-term social order transcending individual relationship with land. Maurice Bloch and Jonathan Parry (1989) explore the relationship between ‘transient individual’ and ‘enduring social order which transcends the individual’ by suggesting two polar economic activities, i.e. a short-term exchange and a long-term one. According to them, ‘a cycle of short-term exchange [...] is the legitimate domain of individual – often acquisitive – activity, and a cycle of long-term exchanges is concerned with the reproduction of the social cosmic order’ (1989: 2). The Suku Asli relationship with space in the past can be characterised by something related to the short-term cycle. Their connection to land was transient and individualistic and was not concerned with the moral social order; they moved from place to place relatively freely and obtained just the resources they needed from the space. However, after their participation in the deforestation of the hinterland, the lands were gradually involved in their moral order, in which they connected lands with their descendants. Even though the newly opened lands were sold, this was justified in relation to the moral

sphere as a practice which assured the livelihood of their descendants. Finally, mangrove marshland became an inalienable space which is not concerned with any individual transient profits. Here, the land is something that should be inherited by descendants as an 'inalienable gift'. In this context, space is obviously characterised by a long-term cycle which is deeply connected with the reproduction of their social order and morality.

In this transformation, it is remarkable that two agents have played essential roles. The first one was the Javanese or the government. Their interventions in the Suku Asli landscape in the form of encroachment on hinterlands and the development projects have encouraged the Suku Asli to change their perception of space to a long-term one. Second, the roles of the *peranakan* Suku Asli are also important. Compared with 'real' Suku Asli, they have the stronger ideology for maintaining the symbolic relationships with their ancestors and descendants. This ideology was embodied in the idea of assuring descendants' livelihood through the newly opened gardens. In other words, the *peranakan* Suku Asli have had much more potentiality to accept the longer-term circle of lands. As a result of the stimulation from these two agents, the connection between persons and space became natural and inevitable, and the marshland came to be regarded as an 'inalienable gift'.

Although Bloch and Parry argue that the short-term cycle and the long-term one are complementary to each other (1989: 25) and do not always constitute a revolutionary series of events, the transformation among the Suku Asli can be seen as a shift from the former to the latter. This seems to be in common with many forest-dwelling tribespeople. In many cases, their social system in terms of their connection to land was not obvious, and they were individually related to the land in a small-scale and family-level fashion. Then, through competition with outsiders and interventions by state development programmes, they started to construct a social order that transcends individual relations to land. Again, it is remarkable that the process can be seen as one where the current people are reconfiguring historically continuous relationships with their ancestors and descendants through their acquisition of lands. In other words, they have obtained a collective identity which has spatial and temporary continuities through the transformation of their perception

of and relation to space. The solidarity of their '*adat* community' is reinforced by emphasis on their connections via their possession of land.

Here, it is noteworthy that the political consolidation of the Suku Asli in interaction with the government has its roots in the negotiation of land and resources. The Pondok Condong was the first organisation formed by the Suku Asli on Bengkalis Island. After it gained success in obtaining the government's legitimisation and land titles, many agricultural, fishing and logging groups of the Suku Asli have been organised in other villages on the island. OPSA was established in the late 1990s by Pak Ajui under the advice of his father, Pak Koding who was one of the three leaders of the Pondok Condong. OPSA is an organisation which supports the life of Suku Asli villagers through the negotiation with the government. On the basis of OPSA, IKBBSA was established in 2005, and Suku Asli interaction with the government has dramatically increased. However, the reason why they established an ethnic organisation is not because they wish to protect their land and resources, and the protection of traditional land and resources is not the main purpose of their recent manifestation of indigeneity. Furthermore, they seem to have no specific economic or political purposes in having done so. Instead, the reason why they established IKBBSA and manifested their indigeneity is much more related to political power, in which the state and local agents are entangled, than economic reasons. I would like to explore this in the next chapter.

It is also remarkable that, as a result of their configuration of descendants' and ancestral lands, the distinction between the Suku Asli and Akit become more obvious. This is because, after they began recognising their descendant's and ancestral land, territory became more important in relation to identity. In terms of this problem, the establishment of the ethnic organisation also played an important role. Therefore, I will reconsider this topic in the next chapter.

Thus, through their changing relation to the land, they have the beginnings of a 'proper' identity – in other words, by emphasising their connection to a particular land, they can start differentiate themselves from other *orang asli* (i.e. other lands) and to unite the 'real' and *peranakan* Suku Asli into a single society. Of course, this change is further reinforced by a number of other changes – like the establishment of an ethnic organisation, the unification of their ritual practices into a single adat and

their acceptance of Buddhism as their ancestral religion. Starting with their ethnic organisation, the next three chapters will discuss these changes.

Chapter 4

Establishment of an Organisation: Leadership, Power and Government Intervention

During my fieldwork in 2012, the pivotal role in manifesting indigeneity was clearly taken by incumbents of IKBBSA. They are the protagonists of Suku Asli traditions. In annual ethnic festivals, they organised ordinary Suku Asli villagers to join, set up performances of traditional dance and music, and invited government officials. They are also the protagonists of development programmes. In their periodic meetings, the incumbents gather together at a village, exchange information on problems, and decide on plans to ask the government for resolutions to these problems. In the organisation of IKBBSA, its members are called *batin*, which originally indicated the traditional headman of the Utan. They are the representatives of each administrative village where Suku Asli live, and they have engaged in various activities in terms of political engagement with the government. Therefore, IKBBSA can be seen as a union of the Suku Asli headmen and the political organisation of the Suku Asli. The government recognises this organisation and usually approaches the leaders first when trying to intervene in the lives of the community.

These *batin* are not traditional headmen who have existed in their community from the past, but new ones who were appointed in recent years. In the past, *batin* was a title that was legitimised by the Siak kingdom. They are alleged to have had rights to control the population and people in a region. When Indonesia gained independence, the legitimacy of the role was abolished, and the Suku Asli did not actually have any *batin* for a long time. The present-day *batin* are people who are appointed by IKBBSA, which was itself established in 2005. In other words, they revived the local ethno-authority. The reclaiming of ethno-history and past forms of authority has taken place across Indonesia in recent years. For example, in Riau, Malay ethno-nationalism is rising against Indonesian nationalism, created in Jakarta (Colombijn 2003b; Wee 2002). The titles of sultans also have been revived in many regions in Indonesia since 2000 (Klinken 2006). These movements are seen as the manifestation of local aspirations to autonomy, which was legitimate before the

independence of Indonesia but was oppressed or ignored during the Sukarno and Suharto regimes.

However, Suku Asli attempts to revive *batin* headmanship seem to be slightly different from similar movements elsewhere in Indonesia. First, the new *batin* do not require the government to reinstate past autonomy and the traditional order that the Utan possessed in the past. Rather, their activities are directed to resolving a number of issues in their life in relation to the modern Nation State of Indonesia. Second, the *batin* headmanship was not simply revived because of the aspirations among the Suku Asli. Instead, the organisation was established under the support of the government for administrative reasons, and in this process, the roles of *batin* were revived as a necessity for completing particular administrative tasks. Why was IKBBSA established, and what has been brought about by its establishment? The answers are closely related to Suku Asli recognition of leadership and the process of establishing themselves as an ‘indigenous’ group.

This chapter explores the Suku Asli recognition of the significance of *batin* leadership and power as well as the process of establishing IKBBSA. The first part is concerned with the history of *batin* headmanship and Suku Asli recognition of it. The second part deals with the process of establishing IKBBSA, and its influence. IKBBSA was established as a result of a government attempt to control tribespeople and the local leaders’ quest for political power; and this is a new relationship between tribespeople and the state – a relationship that emerged in the recent era of ‘decentralisation’.

Headmanship, leadership and power among the Suku Asli

Batin headmanship before independence

I distinguish ‘headmanship’ and ‘leadership’, following Benjamin’s definition. While the former refers to the position that is legitimised in relation to outside authority or the government, the latter is one that the people recognise themselves internally (Benjamin 1968: 1). I would like to begin the description of *batin*

headmanship and its historical shift and then explore the form of leadership among Suku Asli.

‘*Batin*’ is a title of the traditional headman, which is broadly found among tribespeople and some Malays living on the eastern coast of Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula (Skeat & Blagen 1966: 494; Andaya 2008: 202-225).⁴⁵ Although its origin is unclear, given the fact that it prevails over a broad area along the Malacca Strait, the title would have existed among tribespeople before they were subsumed under the control of the pre-colonial Malay state. Then the role was absorbed into the state polity as local authority or as headman. Under the Siak kingdom, *batin* was one of the official titles that the kingdom legitimised. According to *Bab Alqawa'id* published by the colonial Siak government at the beginning of the twentieth century, forty seven *batin* were recognised as headmen on a regional basis (see Junus 2002: 68-76). Hijimans van Anrooij (1885: 285-310) describes that the *batin* of the Siak kingdom had both rights and obligations in terms of control of lands, resources and population in their territories. *Batin* had rights to impose taxes or labour on their subjects, to receive fines from criminals and to control resources. On the other hand, they had obligations to pay taxes and to organise their subjects for engaging in labour for the kingdom. These rights and obligations would have been relatively strictly imposed on the people subjugated by the state. However, the situations of *batin* among the Utan, Akit, Rawa and Sakai, would have been slightly different. Their rights and obligations were much weaker as they lived on the peripheries of the kingdom.

I could not gather concrete and clear information on past *batin* in terms of their communications with the state from Suku Asli informants in Teluk Pambang. However, Pak Moi, the *batin* headman of the Akit in the village of Hutan Panjang on Rupert Island, remembered some of the patterns of interaction between their past *batin* and the Siak kingdom before the independence of Indonesia. According to him, *batin* occasionally went to the capital of the Siak kingdom, Siak Suri Indrapra, some hundred kilometres distant from Rupert and met the sultan. They used small sculling canoes and brought ‘gifts’ (*hadiah*) of forest products such as sago, rattan and

⁴⁵ According to Skeat and Blagden (1966 [1906]: 494), this title was mainly found among Orang Asli societies of ‘the Jakun’ or ‘proto- Malays’ in the Malay Peninsula. On the other hand, Semang rarely had it.

beeswax. Usually, the *batin* individually collected the products, and he and a few followers carried them by canoe. Such gifts were carried to the sultan not on fixed dates or even annually but ‘only on rare occasions’ (*sekali-sekali saja*).

His memory shows some characteristic features of the *batin* of *orang asli* in relation to the state. First, he indicated that the forest products that *batin* carried were ‘gifts’ not ‘tax’ (*pajak*) and *batin* brought the products ‘only on rare occasions’. This means that the *batin*’s obligation to pay tax was weak, and a *batin* himself decided when to bring it to the sultan. Indeed, Hijimans van Anrooij (1885: 303-305, 349) also recorded that the kingdom was able to receive the forest products only when *orang asli* brought them. Second, a *batin* did not obtain the forest products from his subjects. He and probably a few of his kinsmen or friends collected the products and brought them to the sultan. Therefore, *batin* did not implement taxation. Indeed, I have never heard of *batin* imposing taxes on the people of Bengkalis and Rupert Islands. In short, *batin* headmanship in *orang asli* societies was not sustained by rights and obligations imposed by the state system; rather, the *batin*’s autonomous agency was much more important in this relationship.

If so, why did they bring the ‘gift’ to the sultan? This is obviously to do with the quest for both individual and community authority. In the Malay kingdoms, the sultan gave the titles of the kingdom in return for gifts – that is, the tributary system (Andaya 2008: 216). This title legitimised not only the individual status of the *batin* but also the position of his community in the state. In addition, it is important that the title was obtained by his heroic adventures and individual gifts. When I occasionally heard anecdotes of *batin* in both Rupert and Bengkalis, they talked about them with some respect due to their great accomplishments. By bringing gifts to the sultan, they not only obtained the legitimacy of their role and the position of their community in the state, but also demonstrated their authority and power as leaders in their community. Bringing gifts was an exchange of forest products for political power, and *batin* conducted it for the purposes of obtaining it. A *batin* was able to receive or maintain his title through the gift.

It is noteworthy here that, according to historians, this was not only related to the exchange of materials but also to the exchange of supernatural powers in Malay kingdoms including the Siak kingdom. In the pre-colonial and early colonial eras, the

legitimacy of rulers was backed not only with titles and the use of force, but also with their strong supernatural power, called *daulat* (Andaya 2008: 63, 109; T. Barnard 2003: 27-28, 128-130). *Daulat* was 'the supernatural power that guaranteed the wealth and prosperity of the entire population' (T. Barnard 2003: 27). This power was strongly associated with *orang asli* groups living in the forest who were believed to have strong supernatural powers, and the sultan could absorb this power by receiving gifts from them (T. Barnard 2003: 26-28). On the other hand, *orang asli* received the titles with great pride and reverence as an example of the king's munificence. For the *orang asli* recipients, the meaning of the titles was not only assuring their practical status and prestige, but also giving them the opportunity to absorb the potent supernatural power of the rulers themselves (Andaya 2008: 216). At present, the Suku Asli do not use the term '*daulat*' anymore. However, supernatural power is actually related to the political authority of leaders, as I will explain below.

Therefore, the traditional role of *batin* among *orang asli* was deeply related to the authority and legitimacy of their position within the state. They communicated with the state through their gifts, and they maintained their position in the kingdom. *Batin* was the main agent in the connection of a Suku Asli community with the state and their actual relationship.

Batin headmanship in Teluk Pambang

According to Hijmans van Anrooij (1885: 352), there were two *batin* in Utan communities in Bengkalis Island, *Batin Kembung* and *Batin Bantan*. The oral history of the present-day Suku Asli memory supports this record. According to them, while the former was the representative of communities in the east part of the island including the present villages of Kembung Luar and Teluk Pambang, the latter represented those in northern coasts, such as the present villages of Bantan Air and Selat Baru.

According to colonial history, the situation of Bengkalis Island was slightly different to that of other areas in the Siak kingdom, as the island was ceded to the

Dutch colonial government (see Chapter 1). However, in practice, the relationship between Utan communities and the Siak kingdom would not have changed. The interest of the Dutch government lay mainly in ensuring the safety of their political centre, Bengkalis town, and obtaining custom duties from the ships going through the channels; they would not have attempted to control and administrate lands and populations on the island (Hijmans van Anrooij 1885: 307-310). Therefore, the relationship between the Utan and the Siak kingdom would not have changed immediately after Bengkalis Island was ceded to the Netherlands.

The change in *batin* headmanship in Teluk Pambang began due to the increase of Javanese immigrants and their power. At the end of nineteenth century, the Javanese immigrated to the eastern part of Bengkalis Island (see Chapter 3). At first, the Javanese regarded the *batin* as having some authority and legitimacy in the community. Therefore, when they first arrived at Teluk Pambang, they visited the *batin*'s house and asked him for permission to open the lands. After their population increased, the Javanese applied for recognition of their own headman to the colonial government, and the government recognised a Javanese administrative headman, *penghulu*, in 1903. At the same time, the administrative village of Teluk Pambang was established, separated from Kembung village. After the independence of Indonesia, the *penghulu* was reappointed as the official administrative village headman by the post-independence government, and his authority and legitimacy was increased. Even though the Suku Asli living on both sides of the Kembung Luar River at first had minimal contact with the Javanese, people living on the northern coast gradually recognised the authority of the Javanese *penghulu*. By the 1960s, the Suku Asli lived who in the realm of Teluk Pambang recognised the political authority of *penghulu*, and they negotiated with him to open the hinterlands. On the other hand, *Batin Kembung* was appointed *penghulu* of the village of Kembung Luar just after independence. However, after a few years, his role was replaced by a Javanese *penghulu* by the government. The *Batin Kembung*, who still lived in Kembung Luar village in the 1960s, was not at all concerned with this movement of opening land in Teluk Pambang. Also, the *Batin Bantan*, who lived in the present-day Selat Baru, did not become *penghulu*, as the Malays and Javanese were dominant in the village. The last *Batin Kembung* and *Batin Bantan* died in the 1970s and the

1980s, respectively. Suku Asli did not appoint new *batin*. The role of *penghulu* was replaced with *kepala desa* in the 1980s when elections were introduced to local administrative villages. In both Teluk Pambang and Kembung Luar, the Javanese headmen continuously took on the roles. The role of *batin* headman was abolished and its authority declined.

The abolishment of the role of *batin* on Bengkalis Island can be interestingly contrasted with that of the Akit. In Rupat, two titles of *batin*, *Batin Akit-Hatas Titi Akar* and *Batin Akit Selat Morong*, were maintained even after the independence of Indonesia. The difference between them and the situation of the Suku Asli is simple: the post-independence government reappointed existing *batin* to *penghulu* posts in the two administrative villages of Titi Akar and Hutan Panjang. The Akit have been a majority in the two villages, and the roles of *penghulu* and *kepala desa* have been kept by the leaders of the Akit. As a result, the title has been inherited together with the role of *penghulu*.

The difference between the Suku Asli and Akit cases shows that *batin* headmanship was sustained by government politics and authority. The reason why the role of *batin* was not maintained in Suku Asli communities was because it lost its state legitimacy. And, among the Akit, it seems to be highly probable that if their *batin* had not been appointed to *penghulu*, they would have lost the role too. As Pak Odang put it, ‘we have followed *batin* in the past, then *penghulu* and now *kepala desa*’. Through experiencing the pivotal role of *penghulu* in actual political affairs in post-independence Indonesia, Suku Asli now regard the role of *batin* as something of the past. The deprivation of legitimacy by the government reduced the opportunity of having *batin* headmanship within their community. The *batin* headmanship needed to be backed by the state’s authority and it was not.

Leadership in Suku Asli community

While *batin* headmanship was sustained by government recognition, how was their leadership experienced within their communities? According to informants, the role of *batin* in their community was, first, to mediate disagreements between

villagers. When disagreements emerged, the *batin* called both sides to a meeting in his house and mediated them. Second, when Suku Asli moved to different communities, they had to visit the house of the *batin* and inform him of their movements. Third, when they held weddings or funerals, they invited the *batin* and asked him to manage the ceremony. Finally and most importantly, they always asked the *batin* for help when they needed to negotiate something with outsiders. I could not correctly specify their manner of leadership, outside their interactions with the state in the past, in any more detail than this. However, the present situation demonstrates the manner of leadership in their community.

‘Leader’ is a term that I am using as an analytic term as I defined it above, and it is not the word they use.⁴⁶ Leaders are generally male, and when the people wish to refer to them, they just use their names, paying respect by attaching the Indonesian honorific prefix for a male, ‘*Pak*’ to their names. It is difficult to delineate a clear boundary between them and ordinary villagers. Some leaders may have the title of *Ketua Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Warga* (*Ketua RT/RW*: heads of neighbourhood association/community association, which are appointed by administrative village headman in Teluk Pambang), some may have expertise in a shamanic technique, and some may be ordinary elders (*orang tua*) who have knowledge of *adat*. Therefore, a leader’s role is ‘informal’, in the sense that they are not always officially recognised by the state.

In terms of kinship and economic activities, Suku Asli leadership and authority are not clear; even if there is person who leads a specific activity, the position of leader is not fixed. In a household that is composed of a nuclear family, the father is generally registered as a head (*ketua keluarga*) on the family registers of the administrative village office. However, I have never seen a Suku Asli father try to control the behaviour of his wife and children. For example, fathers do not intervene in the choice of their children’s spouse. According to an informant, ‘If my children get a mate or suitor (*jodoh*), they should just marry, as it is their thing.’ In the same way, parents do not intervene in the affairs of the children’s household. They do not

⁴⁶ Although they often use synonyms of ‘leader’ like ‘*kepala*’, ‘*penghulu*’, ‘*peminpin*’ and ‘*ketua*’, these terms seem to be used only for those who have a title, or posts of headman, such as the present *batin*, *adat* manager and the headmen of neighbourhood community appointed by the administrative village headman (*ketua RT/RW*), regardless of one’s leadership within the community.

have a system of paternal leadership in the family. Moreover, in terms of economic activities, their authority is also vague. Until 2006, their main livelihood was mangrove logging. This was completely through individual labour, in which one person went into the mangrove swamps with a small canoe and logged the timber (see Chapter 3). Also, although they occasionally undertake hunting and gathering together, there is no leadership in their cooperation. When several people go into mangrove swamps to collect shellfish, they individually gather them and bring it back to each house. When several men hunt a wild boar with snares and spears in coconuts gardens and mangrove swamps, the people have their own individual roles and the game is equally divided. While they frequently cooperate in everyday life, there is no one who always tries to control others in these activities. Even if people take on a leadership role when cooperating, such leadership is situational.

In the past they were foragers who moved from place to place and obtained resources through hunting and gathering. Such a society is characterised by egalitarianism, and it is difficult to institutionalise fixed power, authority and leadership within this type of community (Lee 2005: 19-20). The lack of fixed leadership in the social sphere of economic activities and kinship has not changed since the era of *batin* headmanship.

However, it is also true that in some spheres of their life, there have been leaders in their communities. First and foremost, leadership emerges in the context of interaction with outsiders. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, communication with outsiders was stressful for Suku Asli in the past because they felt ashamed (*malu*) and fear (*takut*). They have avoided troubles with outsiders as far as they can; indeed, some Suku Asli families moved to the upstream of the Kembung Luar River when the number of Javanese increased around the mouth of the river. However, leadership and a form of authority appeared when Pak Koding and some other people began negotiating land possession with the village headman in the 1960s to ensure access to their land and resources. In this process, they integrated the opinion of ordinary villagers and negotiated with the headman as their representative. Even after the negotiation of land-accesses finished, Suku Asli villagers depended on Pak Koding and some other leaders when they needed to communicate with the village headman, as these people were regarded as having the skill to communicate with the Javanese.

This can be seen as a form of leadership in their community, where leaders are the people who can engage with outsiders.

Indeed, the most powerful leader of the Suku Asli not only in Teluk Pambang but also over the Bengkalis regency as a whole, Pak Ajui, obtained his reputation as leader through his ability to communicate with outsiders. He was born in Teluk Pambang, the first son of Pak Koding in 1966. He graduated from primary school in this village and junior high school in a neighbouring village. Graduating from junior high school was quite an achievement among the Suku Asli of his generation. More importantly, according to him, he was a very good football player in his school days, and he could establish excellent friendships with Javanese boys in neighbouring villages. After graduation, he worked in the village for about ten years in mangrove logging. In 1991, he was employed by a *touke* and worked in an oil corporation in the Rawa region for several years, and learned of things beyond the village. After he returned to the village at the mid-1990s, he organised the OPSA.

According to him, OPSA was first organised by some of his friends for the purpose of obtaining subsidies from the regency government for sport and leisure activities. As his Javanese friends in the village had obtained subsidies in the same way, he planned this and applied. The result was that they obtained the funds and bought several footballs and volleyballs. Then, at the end of the 1990s, he applied to the village headman to open the hinterland forest at the border area of the village in the name of OPSA (see Chapter 3). At this time, around a hundred households joined this application, and they cleaned up the forest. At the beginning of the 2000s, he again applied for subsidies from the government for the purpose of distributing tanks for holding rain water and plastic chairs and tables to Suku Asli households. He also obtained this material and distributed them to the households of Suku Asli in Teluk Pambang.

His leadership has been obviously established through the successful political communications with outsiders, especially with the government. On the other hand, he rarely intervenes in the everyday life of ordinary people in other spheres, and his leadership outside the sphere of communicating with the government is quite vague. Here, present leadership is linked with the past *batin* headmanship. The authority of the past *batin* was legitimated by the state in their tributary relationship, and this

relationship was established by the *batin*'s approach to the state. In the same way, Pak Aju obtained his leadership through approach to the government and his success in obtaining the subsidies and the recognition of their land possession. In short, leadership among the Suku Asli is formulated in the political communication with outsiders. In this view, the state is the most powerful outsider; therefore, the most 'powerful' leaders are people who can communicate with the state. The people I am referring to as the leaders are those who can take care of the communication with the government as representatives of the community. Because of such a quality, when the government intervention increased, leadership became more necessary and leaders' power increased. I will explore this in the latter part of this chapter.

Political communication and shamanic power

In addition to engaging with outsiders, there is another sphere in which leadership emerges in Suku Asli society. This is in the context of ritual. In weddings and funerals, specific elders who know the procedures of the rituals and *adat* are asked to take the role of organising them. Yet, it is particularly obvious in shamanic rituals. In Suku Asli communities, *dukun* often hold rituals for the purpose of healing villagers' diseases and asking for peace in the community. At the ritual, it is necessary to prepare food and small model shrines that are offered to the spirits. On the day of the ritual, neighbours gather together in the house where the ritual will be held and prepare the offerings. In these procedures, a *dukun* gives detailed indications for the preparations and distributes roles to the people. *Dukun* can directly communicate with spirits and ask for their support during trance. Using supernatural power, they care for ordinary people's troubles and anxiety. They hold healing rituals when people fall sick. Some of them also hold annual rituals to guard the people and the territory from the intervention of evil spirits. Shamanic power is not something that everybody can access. Although everyone can communicate with spirits in their dreams, the communication is very vague and passive. *Dukun* are people who were initiated by spirits to be shamans; they have learned spells and other forms of control under the tuition of other *dukun*, and can now actively control

the spirits. As only *dukun* can hear the voices of the spirits, the leader of the rituals is always a *dukun*.

Shamanic séance is not political communication with the government. However, they are analogous in the significance they attach to a generous personality, adventure, courage, and knowledge of the leaders involved. Pak Odang, a famous *dukun* in Teluk Pambang, explained the details of their shamanic cosmology to me. According to him, a *dukun*'s soul (*semangat*) can fly to a different world when he falls into trance during shamanic séances. This different world has a seven-layered structure, and *dukun* can ask for the support of spirits (*datuk*) living at each stratum in exchange for gifts, that is, offerings of food and tobacco prepared for the rituals. The higher the stratum, the stronger the spirits and the more danger the *dukun*'s soul is in. Pak Odang can reach the third stratum, but he cannot reach higher ones. In the past *dukun* had stronger shamanic techniques (*ilmu*), and they were sometimes able to reach the seventh stratum and ask for the support of the strongest spirits. His sketch of shamanic power is almost analogous to the reputation and power of *batin* in the past as described earlier. They travelled to the palace and brought gifts to the sultan. In return, they obtained the title of *batin* and the legitimacy of the Utan community. The present communication with the government involves similar implications. The higher the bureaucratic ranks the officials or the offices have, the stronger their powers are considered to be. But the higher officials or offices are further away, so accessing them is more difficult. A person who can access the higher ranks in the government and bring their power to bear in the community is regarded as a stronger leader. Interestingly, Pak Ajui 'became' a *dukun* several years ago. According to him, the spirits of his father, Pak Koding, who was a famous *dukun* in the village, emerged in his dreams several years ago, and he mastered the way of controlling these spirits under the tuition of his father. He held an annual shamanic séance together with Pak Koding to pray for the peace of the village.

In short, the power and authority of leaders is dictated by their communication skills. The powerful leader is one who can adequately communicate with members of their community, with outsiders, and with the spirits belonging to the supernatural world. In particular, the most difficult and important task is communicating with the government. Through communication, leaders can accumulate power and authority

within their community. It is remarkable that this skill is totally down to individuals. Inheritance is not important at all. Nor is economic power, though economic power may often be obtained by people who have communication skills. Therefore, Suku Asli leadership is charismatic. I use the word 'charisma' in the Weberian sense. According to Max Weber (1947), charismatic leaders are 'natural' leaders, those who apart from the bureaucratic system and their occupation, emerge in 'times of psychic, physical, economic, ethnical, religious and political distress'. And, such leaders hold 'specific gifts of the body and spirit; and these gifts have been believed to be supernatural, not accessible to everybody' (1947: 245). Weber saw these leaders as important agents of social change but as unstable because their authority is not institutionalised. In Suku Asli leadership, such charismatic power is ensured by successful communication, especially, with the government, which ordinary people find hard to carry out. Yet, as it can be seen as their past *batin* headmanship and present-day leadership in everyday life, Suku Asli leaders have not been really interested in ruling or controlling others. IKBBSA was established on such leadership; leaders have actively tried to communicate with the government and adopt government policies as long as the policies do not contradict their own customs and way of life.

The establishment of IKBBSA was not only due to the leader's quest for power, but also the government drive to establish the organisation in recent years. As a result, the unstable charismatic power is partly institutionalised in a bureaucratic organisation. In the next section, I would like to explain how the government approached Suku Asli to establish it and how the leaders adopted the government approach.

Establishment of IKBBSA and its influences

Project to issue marriage letters

I could not confirm the very first agent that suggested the establishment of IKBBSA. The Suku Asli leaders said that they had asked the government to entrust a

new organisation with an administrative procedure; on the other hand, government officials said that the government had needed to implement the administrative procedure among the Suku Asli and thus had established the organisation. Either way, it is certain that the administrative procedure of issuing marriage letters and birth certificates was the main trigger for the establishment of IKBBSA.

In Indonesia, legal matters of marriage are administrated by the department of religious affairs. On the one hand, Muslims can obtain the necessary letter at an office of the department of religious affairs. On the other hand, Buddhists, Christians and Hindus need to each apply for it to the specific religious body to which they belong (see also Chapter 6). A religious body that is authorised by the government issues a marriage letter (*surat pernikahan*) for a couple only when they hold their marriage ceremony under its management. This letter is used for obtaining a birth certificate (*akte kelahiran*) at the government office, which is an essential official document when children want to enter higher educational institutions or obtain a passport. Although it is possible to obtain the birth certificate without the letter, this exception is basically meant for a child of a single mother; applicants for this form of the certificate have to complete cumbersome office procedures in the regency capital and pay relatively expensive charges.

Before 2005, almost all Suku Asli did not have a letter or a birth certificate. This is because they did not belong to any religious body, and even if some did, they rarely held a marriage ceremony under its management. They preferred to hold this within their community in the traditional way. Although it is possible to hold the ceremony twice both in administrative and traditional ways, this was economically difficult. It was also extremely difficult for them to obtain the birth certificate without the marriage letter, because it involved the cumbersome office procedures at the regency office and the expensive charges. Nevertheless, the lack of documents was not so problematic for them at first, as their family registers were kept in administrative village offices and their basic citizenship was assured. However, according to Pak Ajui, problems arose in recent years. According to him:

It was very difficult to get marriage letter for us in the past. So, everyone did not have the birth certificate. It was unequal and often inconvenient. When we want to send children to high schools or professional schools and get a passport, we

had to complete troublesome chores at regency offices. The charge was also expensive. [...] Therefore, we asked the government to issue the letter via IKBBSA.

For them, obtaining the letter was concerned with access to education that it has become essentially important for the future of the Suku Asli. Also they wanted to change the situation of having to pay considerable amounts of money for obtaining the letter and being able to obtain a passport. Therefore, changing the system of letters was an issue that was related to their disadvantaged and marginalised situation. According to him, it was Pak Ajui who had asked the government to issue the latter more easily and cheaply.

On the other hand, from the government's perspective, it was judicially necessary that the Suku Asli obtained such basic official documents. Therefore, the officials needed to begin negotiation with Suku Asli leaders to encourage them to obtain it. As mentioned later, sending their children to high school and obtaining passports that Pak Ajui emphasised was not to do with ordinary villagers' aspirations. Therefore, it is probable that Ajui's emphasis was a result of the government approach at their previous communications with him, in which the officials had emphasised Suku Asli's marginal position, and stimulated his desire to be like ordinary Indonesians in terms of their legal obligations.

This was the context in which a government project to provide the Suku Asli with the letter and certificate started. First, the government enabled the Suku Asli to issue the marriage letter (*surat perkawinan*) by themselves.⁴⁷ In order to issue the letter, it was necessary to have a body that recognised and ensured the marriage in their community on behalf of the religious bodies. Therefore, IKBBSA was established as the body that certified the marriage. Second, it was necessary to have people who were in charge of issuing the letter. Therefore, this role was established at each administrative village and given the traditional title of *batin* in the

⁴⁷ Strictly speaking, this letter, *surat perkawinan*, is different from the one issued by religious bodies, *surat pernikahan*. *Pernikahan* means marriage legitimised by the national laws. On the other hand, *perkawinan* indicates de facto marriage recognised by the community. Therefore, the birth certificate issued with the *surat perkawinan* deals with the child as the mother's child out of wedlock. This means that almost all Suku Asli are children out of wedlock. But this legal status has not caused any problem in Suku Asli society, as far as I know.

organisation of IKBBSA. Third, the government allowed a sub-district office (*kantor kecamatan*), which is slightly nearer to Suku Asli villages than the regency office, to issue the birth certificate with less expensive charges based on the letter issued by the *batin*.

This system started in 2005. In this system, *batin* are not formal officials. They do not receive any salary or have roles in the government. Their task is to issue some types of letters in terms of marriage, divorce, death and the identity of the Suku Asli in return for a small charge.⁴⁸ However, those letters are valid only when written by *batin* of IKBBSA at each village, and these documents are often required to be submitted in the course of various procedures at the government offices at village and sub-district levels. Therefore, in practice, the *batin*'s role is backed by the government legitimation, and the government recognises them as representatives of Suku Asli.

The government and Suku Asli leaders would have designed this system consulting the model case of the Akit. In Rupert, *batin* began to issue the marriage letter in the late 1990s. Among the Akit, as the role of the two *batin* had been maintained, the government could simply delegate to them to issue the letters, and there was no dramatic transformation. However, in the Suku Asli case, it was necessary to appoint new *batin* first, a process which brought about the strong leadership of some people and the consolidation of their power.

The selection of batin and establishment of IKBBSA

When the project to entrust Suku Asli with issuing the letters began, the government and Suku Asli leaders had repeated meetings. The main negotiators for the government were officials of Bengkalis regency. On the other hand, the main negotiator of the Suku Asli was Pak Ajui, and he was strongly supported by Pak Kimdi. Pak Kimdi was another essential agent in establishing IKBBSA. He was a 'pure' ethnic Chinese and a *touke* in Teluk Pambang. He was born in the village of

⁴⁸ The letter of descent, *Surat Keterangan Suku Asli*, shows that one is a member of Suku Asli. According to villagers, it is necessary to apply for the recommendation of the administrative village headman when they want to obtain a passport.

Selat Baru, but he moved to Teluk Pambang when he married a *peranakan* wife in Teluk Pambang. He had a masters degree in political economy from a university in Jakarta, and was elected a regency assembly member (DPRD; *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah*) of Bengkalis regency in 2005. He was also much respected by the villagers, as he made donations to maintain graves, shrines and roads in the village. Also, many Suku Asli worked in his coconut farms and boatslip which exported the coconuts. The houses of Pak Ajui and Kimdi were very close and they would often come and go to each other's house. In terms of the start of the project, Kimdi's contribution would have been very large, as he had considerable knowledge of the law in terms of issuing the letters and strong connections with the government officials. He often advised Pak Ajui in the ways of negotiation. Also, as the assembly member, he approached the government officials to smooth the go ahead of the project.

After the negotiation between Pak Ajui and the regency officials, Pak Ajui was in charge of selecting new *batin* at each administrative village in the Bengkalis and Padang Islands. Pak Ajui actively went back and forth between every administrative village and met his friends and leaders at each administrative village. He asked them to be the new *batin* or recommend someone else who was adequate to take on the role. The essential qualification was good literacy because the new *batin*'s main task was to write the letters. In some villages, the leaders became *batin*. On the other hand, in some villages, young and educated men were appointed as *batin*, as they were more literate than the leaders, who were often aged.

At the establishment of IKBBSA, Suku Asli leaders adopted the government image of an ethnic organisation to a large extent. First, the organisation has a bureaucratic order involving hierarchical and regional organisations. The role of regency *batin* is at the top of the hierarchy. Then there are the roles of the sub-district *batin* and village *batin*. Under the village *batin*, there are the *adat* manager and secretaries. The first regency *batin* of Bengkalis regency was taken by Pak Ajui. The eastern islands of Padang, Ransang, Tebing Tinggi and Merbau Islands became a new regency of the Meranti Islands regency, separated from Bengkalis regency in 2010. At this time, a leader who engaged in the selection of *batin* on these islands in 2005 became the new regency *batin* of the Meranti Islands regency. In addition, a

similar organisation was established among the people who had been called the Rawa living in Siak regency under the support of Pak Ajui, who had a strong connection with the Rawa region. Second, the organisation has an election system, in which the *batin* was appointed by voting within their committee. According to Pak Ajui, this system was introduced as the government required them to use a ‘democratic way’ of choosing. The first vote was conducted in 2005. At this time, all committee members, who had been recommended by Pak Ajui, were appointed to *batin*. Then, in 2010, the second vote was held. At this vote, some *batin* were rejected, because ‘they did not carry out their responsibility’, according to Pak Ajui. These systems are totally new ones created through the cooperation between the government and the Suku Asli leaders. The *batin* system among the Akit does not have these systems of hierarchical order and voting; their organisation was instead nominal.

Identification and certification

The establishment of IKBBSA brought about a change in terms of Suku Asli identification and certification. This change began with the creation of their ethnic name, the adoption of which took place in parallel with the establishment of IKBBSA. Before 2005, the government had, since the colonial era, continuously used the term ‘*Orang/Suku Utan*’ to refer to them. Indeed, the government documents and books that were written before 2005 referred to the people in this way. However, the people themselves would have used a variety of names depending on the context and situation. The term most frequently used was ‘*Orang Asli*’. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, this term most fitted their identity. Even during my fieldwork, many informants used this term when they referred to themselves in conversation. However, this term is vague as ‘*orang asli*’ is generally used for indicating a number of tribespeople – ‘*Orang Akit*’, ‘*Orang Sakai*’ and ‘*Orang Talang*’ are all ‘*orang asli*’. Even if they identify themselves as ‘*Orang Asli*’ in conversation with an outsider, the outsider would ask an additional question in order to specify the group such as ‘And, what is your *suku*’ (*Dan, sukunya apa?*). In this

context, they used '*Suku Asli*'. '*Orang Akit*' was also used by many people who had kinsmen or ancestors related to the Akit in Rupert. Yet, according to present-day Suku Asli, they have refused to be called '*Orang Utan*'. Pak Ajui says:

In the past, our ancestors lived in the forest (*utan*). So, they may well be called '*Orang Utan*'. However, now, we live in a village (*desa*). This name is very rough (*kasar*) and impolite (*tidak sopan*) as we live in villages at present. *Orang utan* is a kind of ape who lives elsewhere. We are human.

However, some would probably have used '*Orang Utan*' as well, at least, in their interactions with the government, because it was the ethnic name legitimised by the Siak kingdom, and one the post-independence government used until 2005.

At the establishment of the organisation of the Suku Asli, it became necessary to integrate the various and vague names. In this process, there was tough negotiation between the government and the people, and they considered a number of different options. For example, '*Orang Asli*' was entertained because the people had used it. However, this name was rejected by the government because it was not a proper name but a shared one. The government suggested the name '*Suku Melayu Utan*' (the Forest Malays). However, Suku Asli leaders strongly rejected this name as they were neither Malays nor living in the forest. In addition, '*Suku Akit*' and '*Suku Rawa*' were options and the leaders considered these in their discussions, but they could not decide between them because there was no consensus. Eventually, the government decided on a completely new ethnic name, '*Suku Akit Jaya*' (the Prosperous Akit) overriding the objections from the leaders. The first organisation was established with the name of '*Suku Akit Jaya*' in 2005, and the government called them that. However, this name was completely new and remote from their own identification, so the people did not accept it. Therefore, in 2006, the leaders again requested the government to change the name to '*Suku Asli*' which they had been used to calling themselves. This name involved a similar problem as '*Orang Asli*' and the government were hesitant to recognise it. However, as a result of the leaders' negotiations, the name '*Suku Asli*' was officially recognised by the regency officials.

The name, Suku Asli, was fixed. This means not only accomplishing an agreement with the government but also clarifying their identity. This clarification of their identity was reinforced by the documents. All documents that are issued by

batin have the letterhead of IKBBSA that includes the name ‘Suku Asli’. In addition, the marriage letter was issued in sets with SKSA (*Surat Keterangan Suku Asli*), which certifies the holder as a member of the Suku Asli community. This can be seen as a landmark event in terms of the certification of their identity. They have had choices of identification based on their individual history of moves, complex of kinship networks, ancestral connections and the community in which they lived (see Chapter 2). However, the documents simplified the issues and clearly designated them as belonging to one ethnic group, the Suku Asli. Although their identity does not always coincide with the addresses on documents, this certifies them as Suku Asli and becomes the main basis of their identification in relation to the government administrative procedures. According to Pak Ajui, all Suku Asli who obtained the letter from IKBBSA are members of IKBBSA, and they are Suku Asli.

It is remarkable that, many *peranakan* – the *peranakan* Chinese, who had less intimate ancestral relationships with the Suku Asli, spoke the Chinese language and lived in Chinese communities (see Chapter 2) – asked the *batin* to issue their letters too. At the establishment of IKBBSA, the role of *batin* was important not only at the administrative villages where many Suku Asli lived, but also in those villages where most of the population were *peranakan*. This would have been a concern of Kimdi’s participation in which he tried to support the *peranakan* Chinese and enable them to acquire the right kind of letter. Until 2007, when the ethnic Chinese wanted to obtain a passport and to register in order to vote, they had to apply for SBKRI (*Surat Bukti Kewarganegaraan Republik Indonesia*) at regency offices; this was an official certification to show the person was an Indonesian citizen. The charge was very expensive, and it was an economic burden for non-wealthy *peranakan*. However, the SBKRI could be replaced by the letter from the *batin*, SKSA. Therefore, they actively applied for the latter. According to Pak Ajui, ‘At present, more and more *peranakan* (Chinese) become (*masuk*) the Suku Asli.’ Many people who may have been regarded as ethnic Chinese ‘became’ Suku Asli, at least, on the document.

On the other hand, through the change of the ethnic name and the documentation of the letters, the boundary with the Akit is becoming clearer than in the past. During my short trip to Rupert, an Akit leader showed his sceptical attitude to the change of the ethnic name of the Utan. According to him, ‘They say “We are the Suku Asli”,

but which *suku asli* are they (*suku asli siapa*)? They were the Akit or Utan, but I don't know who the Suku Asli is.' His opinion was the same as that of the government officials, i.e. the name '*Suku Asli*' is ambiguous; but for the Akit, the Utan are people who have the same ancestors with them. Therefore his opinion involved some discomfort in terms of Suku Asli's disregard of their common history. After IKBBSA was established, Suku Asli leaders repeatedly invited Akit leaders to their meetings and festivals, but the Akit leaders did not attend them. In addition, the documents with the new name can be a potential criterion in distinguishing the Suku Asli from the Akit. The Akit are also an ethnic group as a result of government intervention around the late 1990s. However, in Chapter 2, I mentioned Odang's comment 'I may well become an Akit' when he would move to Rupert. This shows that while ordinary Suku Asli villagers did not really recognise the importance of the way in which their identity was being crystallised on the document during my fieldwork yet, it is possible that it will gain more importance than one based on the region in the future.

Through the fixing of their ethnic name and the official certificates, their identity, which involved vagueness and diversity characterised mostly by the 'non-Islamic alliance' until recently, has started obtaining coherent and distinctive substantiality. However, Scott (1998: 1-83) points out that the government have attempted to reduce complex local knowledge and backgrounds through the simplified identification in order to control them more easily and effectively. It could be argued that the government accomplished this through the establishment of the organisation in the Suku Asli case. In addition, as Hirtz (2003) points out, when one tries to legitimate 'tradition-based' social institutions, they are 'forced to make use of rational form of organization and institution-building' that the national or international authorities legitimate (2003: 910). Nevertheless, in many ways, this is a real change.

Leaders' power and its limitations

The establishment of IKBBSA brought about changes not only of identification and certification, but also in terms of the leaders' power. First, IKBBSA created

political networks between the leaders living in distant communities. Before its establishment, they did not generally communicate, and if they did, it was individually. However, after the establishment of IKBBSA, they held meetings inviting all the incumbents together at certain times of the year. In these meetings, they discussed the problems and issues of each village, and decided the direction of IKBBSA. Their identity that was rather fragmented and vague in the past was integrated, at least, at the level of the leaders.

Second, IKBBSA enabled the leaders to behave as the representatives of the Suku Asli in their engagement with the government. The government had to deal with the leaders' petitions in the same way they had to deal with those from the ethnic organisations of the Javanese or Malays. This dramatically raised the possibility that the Suku Asli could receive support and recognition from the government as 'Suku Asli'. The change of their ethnic name became possible only after the leaders were recognised. They built a community centre (*balai pertemuan*) of IKBBSA in Teluk Pambang receiving government subsidies. They began holding annual festivals and periodic meetings, which received government support. The relation between leaders and the government became closer, and they were able to acquire government support.

Finally, the reputation of some leaders was dramatically strengthened. This was to do with the accumulation of knowledge about negotiation with the government. During my fieldwork, I saw that many people, who were leaders around Teluk Pambang, gathered in Ajui's house every day. Their purpose was to make up various kinds of documents and petitions to the government. The contents of the documents were various, such as petitions to obtain subsidies for fishing and agricultural groups and the certification of land possession. Pak Ajui had a computer and kept various copies of documents that he had submitted to the government. People wrote the documents in his house, brought them back to their communities, and applied for government support or recognition. This raised Pak Ajui and the leaders' reputations in their community. In short, the establishment of IKBBSA dramatically increased leaders' power in society.

Yet, the ordinary villagers' situation has not changed dramatically. After the new *batin* began issuing the letters, almost all of them obtained the letters and certificates

from the new *batin*. However, they have just kept them in their houses and not used them for the purpose that Pak Ajui specified. This is natural because, although a few well-off Suku Asli and many *peranakan* Chinese actually had the desire to obtain the documents easily and cheaply for the purpose of sending their children to higher education institutions or obtaining passports, ordinary Suku Asli had no such desires. For them, it is often difficult to send their children even to junior high school in the village. Also, I have never heard of cases that any Suku Asli, including the leaders, obtained passports using the letters, though some *peranakan* Chinese would have done so. For ordinary Suku Asli, obtaining the letter was no more than a new obligation imposed by the government. They have not obtained any benefits from the documents, at least not yet.

In addition, they have not been concerned with the selection of *batin*. The choice of *batin* was exclusively conducted by Pak Ajui and some of the other leaders. The organisation has been maintained by the voting system conducted within the *batin*'s committee. Furthermore, because *batin* were appointed by the administrative village, the leaders of some small distant communities were not selected as *batin* or other functionaries. In this situation, I met some villagers living on the periphery of an administrative village who did not know who the village *batin* was and confused the village *batin* with the 'informal' leader of their small community. This resulted from the fact that while people obtained their letters and certificates following the advice of the government or the new *batin*, they have not understood that they were also involved as members of IKBBSA.

In short, IKBBSA has been organised and operated neither to reflect the aspirations nor the participation of ordinary Suku Asli. Rather, it is an embodiment of elite (leaders and the *peranakan* Chinese) and government administrators' aspirations. On the one hand, the organisation has allowed the elites to accomplish their aspirations, and then increase their economic and political power through their communications with the government. On the other hand, the government has managed to force the people to obtain the administrative certificates that all Indonesian citizens are required to hold, and identify them more clearly within the administrative procedures. It is also true that ordinary villagers began using their own preferred ethnic name '*Suku Asli*' and have received some indirect benefits from the

operation of IKBBSA. However, these are just the results of their leaders' quest for economic and political power, and ordinary people are not really involved in these activities.

This shows some of the ways in which there is a separation between an ethnic organisation and the actual ethnic group. Ethnic organisation and ethnic group are not equal. As Roger Brubaker points out:

[...] organizations cannot be equated with ethnic groups. [...] Although common sense and participants' rhetoric attribute discrete existence, boundedness, coherence, identity, interest, and agency to ethnic group, these attributes are in fact characteristics of organisation. (2004: 15)

IKBBSA is at the centre of how identity, boundedness and coherence are demonstrated; however, it does not reflect the feelings of ordinary villagers.

A new relationship between tribespeople and the state

In the recent political engagement between the Suku Asli and the regency government, we can see a specific way of creating a new relationship between tribespeople and the state. The state's readiness to recognise the local and traditional authorities has not been a new governing method; the government have always looked for 'informal' leaders, who are outside of state politics, in order to exert control over rural areas effectively (Ufford 1987). For example, in the period of 'ethical policy' (1905-1930; see Chapter 5), the colonial government looked for *volkshoofden*, or 'informal' leaders, and legitimised them through voting in order to drive forward 'modernisation' in rural areas (Ufford 1987: 146-148). After independence, *kijaji*, local Muslim teachers in Java, were transformed into 'cultural brokers' who mediate between the national and local levels under the government pressure to implement religious policies in rural areas (Geertz 1960). Philip van Ufford (1987: 146) analyses the government attitudes as follows:

Any government which declares that modernization is important must find tools for implementing its views. It is in this context that the government may look for

people's representatives, [...] informal leaders. The quest for change requires not only 'tradition', but also a view which makes change manageable. The government, incapable of knowing the myriad of local differentiations, is also faced with its incapability to deal with all of them, and must find people who are able to do so effectively. The concept of the local leader, representing all those 'bound by tradition', provides this need.

However, the government seems to have taken this approach only in its encounters with relatively 'civilised' populations like Javanese and did not apply it to tribespeople. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, during the Sukarno and Suharto eras, the government almost ignored tribespeople or tried to directly reform and restrict their behaviour and ways of life. Tribespeople were regarded as the subjects of development projects that were supposed to make 'backward' and 'primitive' people 'civilised'. In this scheme, recognising leaders' positions was contradictory with the government scheme of 'development' or changing the traditional society, and indeed, the government replaced their traditional headmen by administrators from the civilised outsiders (Effendy 1997: 633-634).

In the post-Suharto era, these policies have been changed, and, in this change, we can see the emergence of 'governmentality' in the manner of government's intervention in the life of tribespeople. The government has recognised their traditional but 'informal' leaders and political institutions and engaged with them. Through these policies, they try to educate the leaders and ultimately to configure habits, aspirations and beliefs among tribespeople as a whole. In other words, the government has tried to shape their 'conduct of conduct' (Li 2007b: 5). The desire, aspirations, and habits that the government want to introduce into tribespeople's communities can be summarised as 'becoming "*adat* community"', a government image of an ideal and harmonious rural community, a specific form of 'indigenous people'. Therefore, in the process of these policies, the government requires the leaders to show their coincidence with the government image and criteria, and the tribespeople show it in 'modern' ways that the government accepts. In the Suku Asli case, they introduced the bureaucratic and 'democratic' ethnic organisation and the documentation of identity. In other words, the government have tried to introduce both indigeneity and modernity to tribespeople's society by effecting an ethos of 'governmentality'. In this sense, indigeneity can be a tool to bring tribespeople to a

modernisation which is framed in terms of how the tribespeople are or, perhaps, ought to be as first and foremost ‘indigenous’.

Thus, this ‘governmentality’ is limited. This limitation emerged because of the cultural logics among the tribespeople themselves. In the Suku Asli case, the leaders pursued their charismatic power in communication with the government, but they were not really interested in controlling or ruling the ordinary villagers, which the government had expected. On the other hand, the ordinary villagers did not want a strong leadership except in the context of communication with the government in their traditional uncentralised and segmentary social structure. As a result, while Suku Asli identity has been obtaining the coherent and distinctive substantiality for the government and Suku Asli participating in the organisation, there are many people who are outside this consolidation.

Therefore, it is necessary for the organisation to demonstrate a distinctive and coherent position of themselves in relation to ordinary villagers. Indeed, IKBBSA have tried to integrate ordinary people through performances which demonstrate the Suku Asli as an ‘*adat* community’. I will explore the way in which IKBBSA tries to involve ordinary people in this way in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Manifestation of Tradition: *Adat*, Performance and Integration

‘*Adat*’ is a key word for understanding cultural diversity and national integration in Indonesia, but its meaning is quite complicated. The term ‘*adat*’ is derived from Arabic, and often translated as ‘tradition’, ‘custom’ and ‘customary law’. In more detail, Franz von Benda-Beckmann (1979: 429) translated this word in his glossary as ‘tradition’, ‘custom’, ‘law’, ‘morality’, ‘political system’, and ‘legal system’. Clifford Geertz (1983: 210) added ‘ritual’ and ‘etiquette’. In short, ‘*adat*’ can be seen as a whole set of enduring practices or ideologies that have been inherited from the ancestors in a society. It is said that *adat* has certainly existed in each rural community since the pre-colonial era, and there are myriad communities having their own *adat*, i.e. ‘*adat* communities (*masyarakat adat*)’, in Indonesia. As *adat* involves the local legal system that may be different from national laws, there have been continuous communications between the locals and the state in terms of and about *adat*. In the colonial era, the government recognised the significance of *adat* as local law in each ‘*adat* community’ as a subpart of the national laws. After independence, while *adat* lost its legal legitimacy in the implementation of integrated national laws, ‘*adat* communities’ were seen as the essential components of post-independence Indonesia. In recent years of ‘decentralisation’, ‘*adat*’ and ‘*adat* community’ have been a banner of the Indonesian ‘indigenous movement’. They are the basis on which the local populations claim their land rights that were ignored during the Suharto regime. *Adat* emerges on the interfaces between locals and the state in the history of the Indonesian state once again, and national activists and local authorities have tried to regain the authority of *adat* in recent years.

However, the relationship between *adat* and state policies cannot be reduced to a simple and fixed arrangement of historically continuous local traditions versus newly imposed national regulation. Reflecting the debates on ‘the invention of tradition’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1992), the concept of ‘*adat*’ in each local community has been influenced by state policies since the Dutch colonial era (e.g. Burns 1989; Henley & Davidson 2007; Josselin de Jong 1948). While some locals, such as ‘*dresta*’

in Bali, '*aluk*' in Tana Toraja and '*adat*' in western Sumatra, had unique terms for indicating their 'tradition', 'custom' or 'customary law', these have been transformed into the pan-Indonesian concept of '*adat*' by policies regarded as acceptable by the state (Acciaioli 1985). In addition, the forces of 'tradition' or 'custom' within a community are different from region to region. Although some local populations, such as the Balinese, Toraja and Minangkabau, have had strong 'traditions' or 'customs', there were communities where traditions or customs were more flexible and diffuse (Li 1999: 10; 2000: 159). In the latter case, people have conceptualised their *adat* in communications with the government as relatively flexible and situational, and this process has continued until today.

The Suku Asli are some of the peoples who have had a flexible and diffuse *adat*. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, their collective identity does not necessarily depend on a single *adat*, and they have used the term *adat* in the very limited sphere of ancestral worship. Rather, their *adat* has been something conceptualised and objectified in historical interactions with the state rather than implying a whole set of socially enduring systems or ideologies. However, in recent interactions with the government through IKBBSA, they have begun using the term *adat* more frequently and with slightly different meaning from their traditional usage – that is, as 'art' represented performatively. By describing the national concept of *adat*, the meaning of *adat* in Suku Asli communities, and their recent manifestation of *adat* in art, I would like to explore the Suku Asli way of manifesting indigeneity in this chapter.

First, I summarise the historical process of conceptualising '*adat*' and '*adat* community' in political communication between the state and locals. Second, I analyse the meaning of *adat* in Suku Asli everyday life and how it has been conceptualised. Finally, I describe the new applications of *adat* after the establishment of IKBBSA and its influence on their society. Suku Asli *adat* is acquiring a new meaning as 'art' through the activity of IKBBSA, and this embodies not only an image of the '*adat* community' as it emerges in state development policies but also as an attempt to create homogeneity within communities through their participation in it.

Conceptualisation of ‘adat’ and ‘adat community’ in political communication

Conceptualisation in the late colonial era

The state definition of *adat* began to be formulated in the early days of the late colonial era in the process of the government trying to effectuate national laws over the archipelago. In the early colonial era of the eighteenth century, the main interest of the VOC was in the exploration of resources and products obtained from the archipelago, rather than ruling the native population. The distinction between Europeans, Dutch subjects and other native populations were not so strict in the legal system of this era, and local legal systems were outside the VOC control. For example, Christians and city dwellers, who were engaged in the miscellaneous activities of Dutch trade, were regarded as the subjects of Dutch national laws, but the rural populations were regarded as the subjects of their traditional customary laws. The VOC government flexibly applied this legal system to the population (Fasseur 1994; Li 2007b: 44). However, after the Dutch government set about reinforcing direct rule over the archipelago at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the government tried to classify the population based on ‘racial’ difference between ‘Europeans’ and ‘Natives’ (*inlanders*; *bumiptera*) (Moniaga 2007: 277). In the government regulations for the Netherland Indies of 1854, for example, it was codified that, while Europeans were subject to Dutch national law, ‘Natives’ including city dwellers and Christians were to be the subjects of ‘their own religious law, institutions, and customs’ (Fasseur 2007: 50; see also Li 2007b: 44). This local ‘religious law, institutions, and customs’ was *adat*. The court system was also divided into two: one for ‘Europeans’ and one for ‘non-Europeans’ (Fasseur 2007: 50). In this legal pluralism, local law systems held a fully legitimised position, even though the laws played only a minor role under the Dutch national laws. In this system, land ownership by the local customary communities was fully recognised, and although the uncultivated land was leased out to Europeans and Chinese, they could not possess the land permanently (Henley & Davidson 2007: 20).

However, this legal pluralism gradually became difficult to sustain at the turn of the twentieth century when some Europeans and officials began insisting on the necessity of effectuating an integrated national law (Fasseur 2007: 50). The ownership of uncultivated lands became problematic outside Java following the expansion of private plantations, and Europeans began requiring the government to apply a European system of land ownership, which allowed Europeans and Chinese to permanently possess the uncultivated lands (Henley & Davidson 2007: 19- 20). In response to this movement, some scholars and officials required the government to protect the rights of the local communities based on their 'ethnic' nature because the severe economic policies, best represented by the 'Culture System' imposed on Java, brought about serious poverty among the locals (Li 2007b: 40-41).⁴⁹ Between the two factions, a debate was sparked at the beginning of the twentieth century on whether a single legal system should be established or not. The centre of the latter stance was at Leiden School of *adat* law studies in Netherland, where Cornelis von Vollenhaven and his colleagues began to elaborate the concept of *adat* in order to oppose the application of the Dutch national laws in the Netherland East Indies.

Von Vollenhaven claimed the recognition and protection of the 'right of allocation' enjoyed by an '*adat* law community' (*adatrechtsgemeenschap*). He defined the right of allocation as one to recognise the free use of uncultivated land within a territory by the *adat* law community and its members, and to restrict alienation and an outsider's use of the lands (Burns 1989: 9-10, 2007: 74). In parallel with this claim, he and his colleagues elaborated the concepts of '*adat*' and '*adat* community'. Peter Burns (1989: 56-57) argues that Leiden scholars regarded *adat* as a total world view. For them, *adat* community was an organic whole; in which people were related with each other and were also connected with the natural world through supernatural beliefs; the role of '*adat* law' (*adatrecht*; *hukum adat*) was to restore and maintain the balances and harmonies in the world (see also Li 2007b: 48). As this idea was totally different from the European legal system, the Leiden scholars insisted that the population of the Netherland East Indies should be governed by their own legal principles (Henley & Davidson 2007: 21). In order to

⁴⁹ A 'Culture System' is a system in which peasants were forced to cultivate cash crops such as coffee, indigo, sugar cane and gambier for exportation. This suppressed the cultivation of self-supporting crops among the peasants, and they fell into serious poverty.

develop their argument, the scholars carried out research on *adat* and rural communities. They categorised the legal-cultural areas of nineteen ‘*adat* law areas’ (*adatrechtskringen*) in the Indonesian archipelago, each of which involved numerous but similar *adat* communities. This categorisation almost corresponded with the map of major Indonesian languages and cultures (Burns 2007: 73).

It is remarkable that the Leiden scholars’ discourses saw the cultural independence of each local community as the main source of the legal right to land. As a local community maintained their cultural independence, in which the locals harmoniously and ‘naturally’ adapted to a region and environment, they held priority over access to the land. By emphasising the position of a historically coherent culture that continued from the past to the future, the Leiden scholars tried to strengthen the argument that local communities’ land rights should be protected. As Li points out (2000: 159), ‘The Dutch concept of the *adat* law community [...] assumed, as it simultaneously attempted to engineer named, bounded, and organized groups’ across the archipelago. The government adopted this idea, and reflected it in the policies to control the archipelago. A series of government policies that actively intervened in the rural lives with the intent of their reforms based on this idea was called ‘ethical policy’ which continued from 1905 to 1930 (Li 2007b: 32, 41-51). Through these policies, ‘*adat* community’ began to be considered the basic rural component of the colonial state polity.

Some scholars point out that the Leiden School was the main agent in constructing the images of ‘*adat*’ and ‘*adat* community’. For example, around the era of Indonesia’s independence, J. P. B. Josselin de Jong (1948) questioned the validity of the concept of ‘*adat* law’ referring to it as ‘confusing fiction’. He points out that the government and Dutch scholars’ emphasis on *adat* was based on European centred perspectives on ‘law’ and ‘custom’ and ignored the complexity of *adat* at local levels. Burns (1989) also suggests that the concept of *adat* is ‘myth’, which was constructed by Dutch scholars and embedded in the polity of post-independence Indonesia as an ‘axiom’ of the state ideology. He stated: ‘the difficulty I have with the myth [...] is that once it is offered as an explanatory device, it is not susceptible to empirical correction’ (1989: 93). It worked as a too persuasive and powerful conceptual framework and rejected deviations. The deviations were interpreted as

breakdowns or polluted repertoires of a pristine *adat* as ever existed (Burns 1989: 78-79, 94-97). The images of ‘*adat*’ and ‘*adat* community’ – that is, a historically continuous and harmonious rural community – was articulated in the interactions between locals and the state for administrative and economic reasons before the independence of Indonesia.

The transformation of the state concept of adat after Independence

The Leiden scholars promoted an ideal, balanced and harmonious image of ‘*adat*’ and ‘*adat* community’, and this image was inherited by the post-independence government. The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia included this ideal image of *adat*. This was accomplished by the contribution of Supomo, a graduate of the Leiden School and a principle author of the constitution. However, ‘*adat*’ in the constitution was not the same as that of the colonial era, and the value of rural communities was more emphasised. During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese colonial government deployed propaganda that Asian people share common values completely different from those of Europeans, especially the Dutch. In this propaganda, *adat* was regarded as the basic value among Indonesians (Bourchier 2007: 116-117; Henley & Davidson 2007: 21). As a result, the concept of *adat* was abstracted and embedded in the constitution as a pan-Indonesian value. Li (2007b: 51 - 52) expresses this abstraction as: ‘the *adat* of the constitution was *adat* in the abstract, *adat* as the embodiment of the zeitgeist, repository of the authentic Indonesian spirit, not the functioning customary practices of rural communities’. *Adat* became something related to the Indonesian nation and nationalism, to which everyone who lived in Indonesia was or should be related. Because of this idealisation, both elites and peasants accepted the concept of ‘*adat* community’, but it was embedded in the political structure of post-colonial Indonesia as a political tool.

The new national concept of ‘*adat* community’ had two remarkable points. First, the legal legitimacy and autonomy that had been enshrined in the past concept of ‘*adat* community’ was dramatically disempowered. In the Sukarno regime, for

example, the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960 referred to the term ‘customary law community’, but it specified that when customary land rights and national law contradicted each other, it was *adat* that had to be amended. In the beginning, this law had provisions on behalf of local communities in order to ‘recognise customary land rights, redistribute former plantations leased to Europeans, and distribute private land held by individuals in excess’. However, as the bureaucracy was limited when it came to exerting state authority, the government failed to implement the reforms (Li 2007b: 52-53). In addition, in the early Suharto regime, the Basic Forestry Law of 1967 also involved the term ‘customary law community’. However, this law was generally interpreted as ensuring the priority of the state’s right over the *adat* communities (Henley & Davidson 2007: 11). By this minimisation of the legal aspects of *adat*, the government tried to defuse not only obstacles based on *adat* that might prevent the state from having free access to the resources in a territory, but also the potential risk that *adat* might bring about particularism and even secession from the state.

Second, the linkage between ‘culture’ and *adat* was maintained or even celebrated. ‘Culture’ here is the traditional practices with “‘thing-like” quality’ such as dances, songs, music, architecture, handcraft and so on (Shu-Yuan Yang 2011). This is partly because the government tried to facilitate tourism, in which ‘culture’ became the important resource to attract foreign travellers. Indeed, Bali and Tana Toraja became the centre of mass tourism emphasising their ‘culture’ after the 1980s (Acciaioli 1985: 158-159). However, more importantly, this is because the government tried to control local populations through the culturalisation of *adat*. By defining local *adat* as ‘culture’, the government was able to reduce the legal and political influence of local *adat* without strong resistance. By simplifying the local cultures in terms of *adat*, the government was also able to catalogue them and make them ‘a constituent of an alleged national culture’ (Colombijn 2003b: 337). I will return to this topic at a later part of this chapter.

After the fall of Suharto in 1998, the autonomy and self-determination of local communities was reconsidered under the banner of *reformasi*. A series of laws, which suppressed local rights, were amended. Under this government framework, the connection between *adat* and the law has been reconstructed by NGOs and local

authorities. The most influential NGO AMAN includes the term '*adat* community' in its very name, and translates the transnational concept 'indigenous peoples' as '*adat* community' (see Introduction). They are trying to recover local land rights in the areas where the government and corporations have exploited land and its resources emphasising the importance of protecting the rights of local people in terms of *adat*. In addition, the local elites also have begun to claim their customary land rights against the government's encroachment. They also emphasise the value of their '*adat*' and '*adat* community' and have tried to negotiate with the government (Henley & Davidson 2007: 1-5). This means that a legal character has been attached to '*adat*' once again in the recent indigenous movement in Indonesia.

The impact of the state concept on local communities

The state concepts of '*adat*' and '*adat* community' were formulated after the late colonial era, and their implications have been changing in accordance with the implementation of the government administrative and economic policies. However, at the level of local communities, local authorities have employed their own *adat* when mediating negotiations and disputes within their communities (Acciaioli 1985: 150; Li 2000: 159). Therefore, the locals have been confronted with the necessity to adjust the implications and operations of their *adat*, which were inherited from their ancestors as practices, in accord with the change in implications created by the state concept.

On the one hand, the impact of the state conceptualisation of *adat* on the local *adat* can be seen as a process related to its reduction or 'erosion' (Acciaioli 1985: 152). Greg Acciaioli (1985) describes such a process among the Da'a Toraja. Suggesting that '*adat* has provided the primary frame of reality' for the local communities, he argues that 'the penetration of national organizational forms has operated to relativize *adat*, to situate it as but one plan for living among a host of others' (1985: 151-152). Then, he continues:

No longer a matter of practice, following *adat* has become a matter of consciously adhering to prescribed ceremonial, of performing ritual and acting in

accord with an etiquette deemed valuable though not exclusive in its claims to adherence (1985: 152).

Adat was an unconscious and exclusive frame of reality for the local communities. However, in the process of the state's penetration into local life, *adat* was eroded and became an alternative to the national law and reduced to a ceremonial one. Yet, in contrast, the state policies also encouraged the locals to codify and elaborate their *adat*. Franz von Benda-Beckmann & Kees van Benda-Beckmann (2011) argue that the Minangkabau elites elaborated and codified their *adat* in terms of land rights in the judicial pluralism that existed under the Dutch colonial rule. Analysing the records of local government and courts in western Sumatra, they note that in the colonial government policies that forced the Minangkabau to cultivate cash crops for exportation, Minangkabau elites conceptualised the right of allocation as *adat* in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and this was maintained by the locals until today. They emphasise the role of local agency and, in this sense, *adat* became a counterclaim of the locals against the national policies. In either way, the ancestral practices, which have been unconsciously inherited from the ancestors, have been objectified and fixed in each local community under the influences of the state policies regarding *adat*.

However, the transformation of the local *adat* did not happen simultaneously in every community across the archipelago; rather the process has been gradually going ahead. As the trigger was the Dutch colonial or post-independence government politics, the transformations have been brought about in accordance with the increase of engagement with the government. Li (2000) points out that tradition or *adat* was formed as a result of the state interventions rather than inherited from ancestors, and the process is not homogeneous over the archipelago. According to her:

[...], it corresponded better to the formations that arose as *result* of colonial interventions (including the *adat* codification process itself) than it did to those that existed prior to Dutch control. In regions of little interest to the Dutch, the process of traditionalization did not occur or was incomplete, and identities, practices, and authority in matters of custom remained—and in some cases still remain—flexible and diffuse. (Li 2000: 159; see also Benda-Beckmann 1979; Benda-Beckmann & Benda Beckmann 2011; Li 1999: 10)

The communities that experienced the transformation of *adat* were those in the areas only where the colonial government was interested and had strong influence, such as western Sumatra and Bali (see Benda-Beckmann 1979: 120-125). However, there are many areas where the colonial government was less interested; the local authorities did not work adequately; and the possession of uncultivated land was not competitive. In such communities, *adat* has remained flexible and diffuse, and the transformation of *adat* is something continuous until the present. The Suku Asli are obviously some of those who have not been influenced by state policies until very recently and have had flexible and diffuse customs.

Meaning of *adat* in the Suku Asli community

The usage of adat among Suku Asli

While some societies have a unique term to indicate their ancestral practices in their language such as '*dresta*' in Bali and '*aluk*' in Tana Toraja, the Suku Asli do not have it and use '*adat*'. Given the fact that the term was derived from Arabic, Suku Asli initially adopted the concept through their communication with dominant Malays and Minangkabau after they were subsumed under the polity of the Siak kingdom in the eighteenth century. It is unknown how they used the term *adat* in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, present-day Suku Asli use the term *adat* in a very limited sphere of everyday life, and the meaning appears to be vague.

They do not use the term *adat* in terms of possession of land and resources at all. As for the lands of homestead and hinterland gardens, they just follow the national law. Each household usually registers the ownership of the homestead and gardens at the village office, and they buy and sell the lands based on the market rate and their negotiating skills. On inheritance of the lands, they divide it among their children equally. They do not express such rules as *adat*; the people concerned seem to naturally accept it without any references to *adat*. As for the mangrove swamps, to which the 'right of allocation' might be applied, they also do not use the term *adat*. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the most important source of livelihood before was

mangrove logging in the swamps. With regard to logging, people went to the swamps in small canoes and freely logged the timbers where they wanted in the basin of the Kembung Luar River. There was no ownership or priority of use there. Therefore, the Javanese and Malays also logged mangrove timbers freely. Only after the government began to intervene in ownership after the 2000s, did they begin to claim their ‘ancestral land’ (see Chapter 3). However, they do not use *adat* in order to claim it.

In addition, the moral rules or prescriptions of individual behaviours are not referred to as *adat*. For example, Pak Koding refused the idea that a rule related to mutual aid should be expressed as *adat*. One day, we talked sitting on a bench that was fixed in front of his house. During our chat, his tobacco finished and he asked me for a cigarette with a phrase, ‘Please give me one (*Minta satu*)’. Smoking the cigarette, he began talking about a rule or moral called *satu* in Suku Asli society in the past. *Satu* literally means ‘one’ in Indonesian as well as in their dialect. But it was often used when a person asked someone to give a part of their personal belongings as seen in his use of the phrase. At this time, according to him, the person having the cigarette was never able to reject the request without a plausible reason. If rejected, he might not have received any cooperation from others. This rule was applied not only to tobacco and food, but also to cooperation in economic activities in general. Even though this is still the case if one always rejects requests from others, according to Pak Koding, the constraint in the past was much stronger than it is today. Hearing his explanation about ‘*satu*’, I asked him “‘*Satu*’ was a kind of *adat*, right?’ He looked slightly pensive and answered ‘No, it’s not *adat*. It’s a kind of rule (*macam peraturan*); it’s just a wrong behaviour of the person (*itu salah dia*).’ It is very common that they refer to the prescribed behaviour as a ‘rule (*peraturan*)’ and individual derogations from the rule or prescription as ‘wrong (*salah*)’. However, they do not explain the prescription using the term *adat*. I have never encountered a scene where one tried to negotiate with others using the term *adat* in the sense of a whole set of rules prescribing their behaviour or moral conduct in everyday life.

However, Suku Asli certainly use the term *adat* to indicate a part of their practices within their community – that is, in the context of rituals related to ancestral worship. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the basic rituals that are related to their

ancestral worship are weddings, funerals, the anniversary of the dead, and the feast of *tujuh likur*, and these rituals are characterised by communication with their ancestral spirits. In the wedding ceremony, they call their ancestral spirits by burning incense and informing them of the marriage of a descendant. The parents of the bride treat the attendants to *sirih*, tobacco, areca nuts, gambier and so forth which are contained in a sacred *sirih* box inherited from the ancestors. Dances, music and *silat* are performed as an essential part of the ceremony. At the funeral, they inform the ancestral spirits of the death. While the funeral ceremony does not include dances, they perform *silat* when they carry the coffin out of the house. The feast of *tujuh likur* (means ‘twenty seven’; New Year’s feast held based on the Islamic calendar) is said to be the largest annual festival, and it is held on the 27th Ramadan of the Islamic calendar. They set seven bowls of rice as offerings to their ancestral spirits at the front and back entrances of each house. Seven is a sacred number in Malay culture (Skeat 1900: 508-509), and the number emerges in many scenes of every Suku Asli ritual as well. Dance and music are performed through the night. All these ceremonies include a ritual to offer meals to their ancestors and to communicate with them. They prepare bowls of food in the living room and burn resin incense at the entrance to the house. The head of the family confirms the ancestors’ arrival by dropping two pieces of coins or wooden tags on the floor. The combination of heads or tails shows the ancestors’ will in terms of ‘yes’ or ‘no’. After several minutes, the head of family drops the coins or tags again to confirm that the ancestors have finished eating the meals. All these rituals are called *adat*. More correctly, the word *adat* indicates not only the ritual itself, but also all procedures, conventional actions, properties and rules that emerge in the ceremonies. For example, they describe the *sirih* box itself as ‘*adat*’. Dance, music and *silat* itself are also expressed as ‘*adat*’.

In the same way, marriage rules are also often referred to as *adat*. In Suku Asli *adat*, the marriage between bilateral kinsmen is regarded as incest. If two kinsmen want to marry, the marriage is regarded as an immoral marriage violating their *adat* (*sumbang*) (see Chapter 2). The reason that these marriages are prohibited is because, according to the Suku Asli villagers, ‘We cannot inform the ancestors of such marriage’. In the past, the couple who violated this *adat* was confined to a large fish trap made of thorny plants, and sunk in the river. At present, if such marriage is

conducted, the couple cannot receive any support or celebrations from their parents and ancestors, and have to leave their community. In short, for them, everything that is related to their ancestral worship is *adat*.

Interestingly, other rituals are not referred to as *adat*. First, they often conduct shamanic rituals for the purpose of healing the sick or protecting their hamlet from malevolent spirits. This kind of ritual is not referred to as *adat*. It is explained as a kind of encounter between shaman's individual supernatural power and the benevolent spirits, and described as *ilmu batin* (inner technique or headman's technique). In this ritual, while they often offer food to the spirits, there are no procedures that imply connections with their ancestors. Second and more importantly, all rituals held in the *peranakan* or Chinese way are not referred to as *adat*. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the *peranakan* or Chinese way also involves ancestral worship and such rituals are held periodically; however, this kind of ritual is just called 'ritual (*acara*)', and its procedures and instruments are not described as *adat*. The rituals, procedures and instruments that may be described as *adat* are all related to those that are 'real' Suku Asli. Therefore, *adat* is something related to 'real' Suku Asli ancestral worship.

However, there is another use of the term *adat* with a more comprehensive and abstract meaning, which emerges in the context of their relation with outsiders. One day, I talked with Pak Koding about the people living in Teluk Pambang focusing especially on the history of the relationship between the Malays and Suku Asli. After we talked about the topic for a while, he concluded: 'But today, there are various Suku Asli in this village. There are people of the ethnic Chinese, the Batak (*orang Batak*), and people from Kalimantan (*orang Kalimantan*) and Flores (*orang Flores*).' Indeed, in the western part of Teluk Pambang where I conducted the survey, there are three households in which *peranakan* Suku Asli men married with Batak women and there is a household in which a man from Kalimantan married a Suku Asli woman. A bachelor from Flores also worked in the house of Pak Ajui. I asked him: 'Are they Suku Asli as well?' He answered 'Sure. They married here and are following our *adat* (*ikut adat kami*).' In the same sense, they sometimes claimed that those who converted to Islam and Christianity (see Chapter 6) or violated the marriage rule: 'are not following *adat* (*tidak ikut adat*).' In these contexts, the term

adat is obviously used for indicating not only ‘real’ Suku Asli ancestral worship but also *peranakan* or Chinese worship. Furthermore, *adat* in these contexts can be seen as their everyday life in their community. In either way, *adat* can work as a criterion for distinguishing ‘us’ and ‘others’.

In short, the term *adat* is, first and foremost, used for indicating the practices and instruments that are related to ‘real’ Suku Asli ancestral worship, and occasionally used as a criterion of differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘others’ including *peranakan*/Chinese ancestral worship. However, the term *adat* is not used for indicating other rules and morals. Throughout my field work, I did not encounter situations in which *adat* was used in this way.

Adat as an embodiment of resistance

Adat has often been seen as a total world view of a local community in the studies of Indonesia. Leiden scholars saw *adat* in this way. Acciaoli (1985) also sees *adat* as having similar implications and states that, in the past, ‘*adat* provided the cosmological order, the primary, perhaps sometimes the only, explanation that rendered the world intelligible and informed one as to how to act in it’ (1985: 152). For him, and probably among the Da’a Toraja, *adat* involves a macrocosm which shows how people should be and what the world is. *Adat* was seen as a primary and comprehensive explanation of the cosmos and a norm for behaviour. In a similar way, Renske Biezeveld (2007: 204) explains *adat* among the Minangkabau as follows:

[...] *adat* can mean either local custom or a society’s fundamental structural system, of which local custom is only a component. In this latter sense *adat* forms the basis of all ethical and legal judgements and the source of social expectations. In short, it represents the ideal pattern of behaviour.

However, the Suku Asli do not explain their moral prescriptions, rules of land possession, social values and cosmological order with the term *adat*. Rather, *adat* emerged only in the contexts of ancestral worship and distinguishing themselves from others. This does not seem to be just a result of the reduction or simplification

of *adat* caused by state intervention. Why have they used this term only in these contexts?

Although I cannot comment specifically about why they do not use *adat* in the sense of a total cosmos or as an ideal pattern of behaviour, these issues seem to be related to the historical process of forming their ethnic identity. As I argued in previous chapters, first, they were coastal foragers who individually moved around a vast coastal area. In this ways of life, they communicated and lived with people who had, more or less, different norms, rules and practices. Second and more importantly, after the mid-nineteenth century, many ethnic Chinese and some of their customs and beliefs, which were not expressed or understood as *adat*, were accepted by the Utan communities. Through these processes, their *adat*, which might have been an exclusive framework of their actions and reality in the past, was relativised as one of a number of frameworks. Indeed, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, there are two ways of understanding their ancestral souls in Teluk Pambang, and both are accepted as possible ways. The Suku Asli do not summarise the whole body of their customs or ancestral practices through the symbolic term *adat* because of the historically continuous communications they have had with other *orang asli* communities and the ethnic Chinese even before state intervention in the concept became obvious in post-independence Indonesia.

Here, I would like to suggest that *adat* in Suku Asli society is not a total cosmological order or an ideal pattern of behaviour inherited from the ancestors. Rather, it is a part of their whole tradition, which has been objectified in and through the communications with the state, and especially Muslims. In Suku Asli society, ancestral worship and their criterion for distinguishing ‘us’ from ‘others’ are strongly related. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, they have had *orang asli* identity based on the image of having common ancestors, in which their non-Islamic ancestral religious practices have been the main criteria for belonging. However, on the eastern coast of Sumatra, the dominant majorities have been the Malays, Minangkabau and Javanese, and their religion is exclusively Islam. The Suku Asli have been discriminated against and marginalised because of their relatively weak association with *agama* legitimised by the state. In this situation, the Suku Asli have continuously confronted the necessity to demonstrate the legitimacy of their ancestral worship that does not

include the ideology or doctrine of *agama* (see also Chapter 6). In this process, they would have adopted the term *adat* and tried to explain its legitimacy. This term legally enabled them to differentiate their thoughts and beliefs from the dominant ideology and maintain their traditional way of life in the binary schema of *adat* versus state control. The Malays and Javanese could accept it as the term involves the legitimation and justification of local customs in the state image. Therefore, the term *adat* in Suku Asli community comprehensively indicates their traditional ancestral worship, and it also emerges in the context of distinguishing themselves from outsiders.

Yet, the other spheres of Suku Asli life were not really involved in contradictions or competitions with others, and such practices and beliefs are not referred to as *adat*. First, they were not involved in the competition for living space with the Malays and Javanese until very recent years. Before the late 1990s, their livelihoods depended exclusively on the mangrove swamps, and they accessed its resources freely. Therefore, they did not need to objectify and claim traditional land usage and rule as *adat*. Second, the Malays and Javanese had not intervened in or tried to change their moral prescriptions and the codes of individual behaviour, as they regarded the Suku Asli as ‘backward’ and ‘primitive’ people who do not have *agama*. Therefore, the Suku Asli did not objectify such practices and values as *adat*. Third, the Malays and Javanese in this region have not intervened in the shamanic practices of the Suku Asli. Although the Javanese and Malays are Muslims, they also have traditions of shamanic techniques. Finally, in terms of the *peranakan* or Chinese way of rituals, the situation seems to be more complex. The form of rituals is obviously derived from China, and Chinese cultures have been always ‘foreign’ and hence oppressed in Indonesian policies after the 1960s. Given such restrictions, it would have been difficult to claim Chinese rituals as the Suku Asli tradition in communication with Muslims. Therefore, they do not refer to the rituals as *adat*, although the rituals may be included in the comprehensive and abstract meaning of their *adat*.

In short, *adat* is a part of the whole local tradition that was objectified in competitions, contradictions and conflicts with state interventions and other outsiders in order to claim the legitimacy of local practices. Moreover, this is the case, or

partly applied to, elsewhere in Indonesia, where the concept of *adat* has been much more developed and elaborated than in Suku Asli communities. For example, as mentioned above, the Minangkabau objectified and elaborated their traditional rules and rights of land as *adat* when the competition of land possession with the Dutch colonial government became serious in the mid-nineteenth century (Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann 2011: 178-179). Also, their matrilineal system has been strongly associated with *adat*, as it involves contradictions with Islamic law, which is characterised by a patrilineal system. Their traditional headmanship, the *panghulu* system, has also been strongly related with *adat*, as it does not always conform to the state bureaucratic administrative headmanship (Kahn 1993: 31-50, 119-120, 160-165). While Li recognises (2007a: 338) that *adat* institutes orderly rule and promotes harmony, she also points out that it may be deployed to challenge the state authority. *Adat* always involves contradictions with the central power or ideology, which the state has exerted on local communities. By claiming *adat*, the local communities may have legitimated their traditional local customs implying the difference of local particularity and national universality.

In this sense, *adat* can be seen as an embodiment of resistance among the locals against the interventions by the state. Indeed, the concept of *adat* has been constructed by the state through the late colonial era policies and inherited by the post-independence Indonesia, as Burns (1985) and others have pointed out. However, in the constructed framework, the locals have protected and maintained their customary practices by objectifying and defining them as *adat*. In particular, this was the only way to claim local rights, self-determination and autonomy during Suharto's era, in which the government strongly implemented the exploitation of local lands and resources under the banner of 'development'. Using terms such as 'rights', 'self-determination' and 'autonomy' was dangerous in an oppressive polity. If the local community had any conflicts with the government, they used the term '*adat* law' to negotiate. This choice of the term 'was a safer, although not necessarily more successful, way of defending rights than expressing them in overtly political terms' (Benda-Beckmann & Benda-Beckmann 2011: 183). *Adat* is an objectification of local traditions in the struggle with the state, where it is utilised as a tool to claim legitimacy in a form that the state might accept.

I do not intend to insist that all *adat* in Indonesia are manifested in the context of relationships with the state. It is actually the case that *adat* has taken the role of customary laws, a cosmological order, moral prescriptions and the rules of land usage in contexts which do not display resistance against the government. In addition, the government have constructed *adat* for the purpose of controlling the population. However, *adat* involves a qualification that has been formed and objectified in the resistance of the locals against the central power. This qualification is very obvious in Suku Asli communities. For them, *adat* has been not a whole tradition or a simple inheritance from ancestors nor constructed by the government, but an embodiment of resistance that was objectified in their engagement with the state.

Adat as performance

Adat as dance, music and song

As I have already suggested, Suku Asli term '*adat*', first and foremost, indicates ancestral worship and the procedures surrounding it, which has been formed in communication with Muslims. Although this has been the case until today, the meaning of the word has been changing. They are increasingly using the term to indicate a specific part of rituals, i.e. music, dance and songs. This change of accent is related to the government's intervention in their life. However, this change is not a form of their resistance as mentioned above, but rather an adoption of the government idea, and one which brings about the integration of their communities as an '*adat* community'.

The use of '*adat*' that I first encountered in Teluk Pambang emphasised dance and music in ritual. On the very day of my first visit to the village, a wedding ceremony was held at a house, and I was able to join the feast. Pak Atang, who was a village *batin* at Selat Baru, led me around the site. When four girls with matching green clothes began dancing together with music played by a band consisting of a clarinet, a viola, a gong and two drums, he said to me: 'This is the Suku Asli *adat*' ('*Inilah adat Suku Aslinya*') indicating their dance. After that, I sometimes heard the

word '*adat*' in other contexts. As mentioned above, they called funeral rituals and weddings as '*adat*' or '*adat ceremony*' (*acara adat*); an elder explained that marriage between cousins was prohibited by '*adat*'; also, they mentioned *adat* in distinguishing the Suku Asli from others. However, most frequently, they used it to indicate dances, music with a traditional band, *silat*, or clothes and objects like a *sirih* box used in rituals. The word seemed to be equivocal and ambiguous, but conventional as in the phrase of: 'This is the *adat*'.

One day, I asked Pak Odang, who took the role of '*adat manager (kepala adat)*' in IKBBSA, about the meaning of *adat*. 'People use *adat* in the sense of dances, music, clothes and so on. Is the meaning of *adat* really like that?' He answered:

No, it's different from *adat*. Dances, music and clothes are 'art (*kesenian*)', not *adat*. Art is a part of *adat* (*sebagian adat*). [...] There are various *adat*. Ceremonies like funeral and wedding are also *adat*. *Adat* is whole ways from our ancestors and for respecting them. [...] But I know people often use '*adat*' in the meaning of art. This is because officials in the Department of Culture and Tourism say *adat* is like that.

Dances, music, clothes and songs are actually important components of their *adat* or ancestral worship. However, these are not the whole of *adat*. Nevertheless, the reason why Suku Asli often refer to these as '*adat*' is because the officials at the Department of Culture and Tourism (*Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata*) used it for indicating their dance, music and clothes.

Their emphasis on 'art' in the usage of *adat* is related to their recent communications with the government. The Department of Culture and Tourism is a department in the regency government, which is in charge of promoting culture (*kebudayaan*) and tourism (*pariwisata*). Although the Suku Asli had not had any relationship with this department in the past, after IKBBSA was established, they began working together when IKBBSA held ethnic festivals and meetings. The department contributed the subsidies for these events, and the leaders received it from them. According to Pak Aju, the department budgeted for the instruments of their *adat*, such as clothes, gong, viola, drums and other decorations used in rituals, and encouraged them to perform the dances and music at the festivals and meetings. Although I could not see actual communications between the officials of the

department and Suku Asli leaders, the government officials must have tried to educate the leaders in how important manifesting this form of *adat* was for the Suku Asli in state policies and to configure their attachment to this form of *adat* when they negotiated the subsidies.



Photograph 10. Marriage ceremony and dance (*tari gendong*) of the Suku Asli (Teluk Pambang)

This form of *adat* is most fruitfully performed at the ethnic festival held by IKBBSA. It was first held in 2010 at Penyengat, which is a village of the Rawa or Suku Asli Anak Rawa, in the Siak regency. Then, in 2011, it was held at the village of Sesap of Tening Tinggi Island in Meranti Island regency. Although IKBBSA planned to hold it at Teluk Pambang in 2012, this was cancelled because they could not obtain the subsidies from the Bengkalis government. Although I could not attend the festival in 2012, I heard about it from Pak Ajui and watched scenes recorded at the festival held in 2010. At the festival, hundreds of Penyengat villagers, all *batin* headmen of IKBBSA of the three regencies, and a dozen followers of each *batin* joined in. In addition, a dozen officials were invited as guests of honour. During the

festival, several officials and *batin* headmen made a speech in which they spoke out about the necessity of development (*pembinaan*) and progress (*maju*) of Suku Asli communities as a group of the KAT. Then, Suku Asli attendants performed dances, music and *silat* wearing Malay-like ethnic clothes, which had been prepared for this festival, in front of the officials. According to Pak Ajui, there was a dance competition of *tari gendong*, which is a group dance and performed at wedding ceremonies in Suku Asli communities, by the representatives of each administrative village. The dancers of each village practised dances and music for the events. In their training, according to Pak Odang, the performances were termed *adat* following the officials' expressions of the 'art' as *adat*. As a result, many ordinary villagers began describing dances and music as *adat*, although it was only a part of their rituals.

In addition, Odang's role, *adat* manager, is also related to the 'art' rather than ancestral worship. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, some roles were newly created when IKBBSA was established in 2005 in accordance with the government guidance. In this process, the role of *adat* manager was also created. Other ethnic organisations, such as LAMR (*Lembaga Adat Melayu Riau*; Riau Malay Adat Organisation) and IKJR (*Ikatan Keluarga Jawa Riau*; Javanese Family Association in Riau) had this role managing the matters of their own *adat*, and IKBBSA adopted it. Pak Odang had adequate knowledge of ancestral worship and its procedures. However, he rarely engaged in this work because the ancestral rituals were usually held by the kinsmen and neighbours of the household. Instead, his main role was to give instruction about dances, music and songs to the girls who performed them in the wedding ceremony and periodical meetings of IKBBSA, and because of this, he was recognised as the *adat* manager of Teluk Pambang by the villagers.

It is noteworthy that this usage of *adat* is applied only to the dances and music that emerge in the rituals of 'real' Suku Asli. The procedures and instruments, which emerge in the rituals of the *peranakan* or Chinese way, such as paper money, incense stick and red symbols, are not referred to as *adat*. Also, although Suku Asli use the dedicated drums and gongs in the rituals held by Chinese spirit mediums, they do not refer to the instruments and rhythms as *adat*. In the festivals and meetings, while the

adat that are performed in front of the officials are only those of ‘real’ Suku Asli, the Chinese performances and symbols never make an appearance.

The term *adat* is increasingly used to indicate a part of their ancestral worship, that is, dances and music, among ordinary villagers. This is a result of the government constitution of ‘art’ as *adat*, and this usage has been accepted by ordinary villagers through the activities of IKBBSA. It is very important that the ordinary villagers are actively engaging in this kind of *adat*, i.e. dance and music, recognising that these are their traditional activities, though, as I argued in Chapter 4, they are not really concerned with the political activities of IKBBSA. In other words, as a result of their emphasis on ‘art’, the ordinary villagers have been involved in the activities of IKBBSA.

Performance as erosion or participation

The state attempt to redefine local traditions as ‘art’ is also found in other regions, and it is associated with the reinforcement of state control over the local populations. First, it is concerned with reducing local tradition in the process of strengthening national laws, norms and morals, as I mentioned in the first part of this chapter. In the study of the Da’a Toraja, Acciaioli (1985) finds the state attempt to identify song, dances and death rituals as *adat* separating it from their total cosmology and religious beliefs, i.e. *aluk*. By doing so, the state can relativise and reduce the values of laws, morals and norms in their tradition without the local resistances that might emerge if the state completely rejected their local tradition as a whole. ‘Regional diversity is valued, honoured, even apotheosized, but only as long as it remains at the level of display, not belief, performance, not enactment’; as a result, the belief and enactment of the local tradition is eroded (Acciaioli 1985: 161-162). Second, it is related to the efficacy of reinforcing the political and economic dependency between locals and the state. Through the description of the Bunun, an Austronesian-speaking people of Taiwan, Shu-Yuan Yang (2011) suggests that ‘music, art, dance, ritual, ethnic attire, and handcraft’, which are a part of the local tradition actively supported by the state, contain a ‘thing-like’ attribution. This

‘thing-like’ tradition is vulnerable to appropriation by the state in comparison to their beliefs, norms and morals, and the state can control the people and their tradition through the appropriation. She concludes: ‘The politicization of culture has the potential to draw the Bunun into the bureaucratized discourse of tradition which would result in their greater dependence on the state and a commodity logic that can further marginalize them’ (2011: 327).

This analysis is also true in the case of the Suku Asli. The traditional usage of the term *adat* was an embodiment of their resistance, with which the Suku Asli were able to contrapose their ancestral ways with the state ideology and to justify its legitimacy. In this meaning, *adat* was something existing outside or as opposition to the state control. Yet, *adat* as ‘art’ is something visible, aesthetic and performative, and it can be placed under the government’s cultural policies. That is to say, this *adat* is domesticated and has lost the contraposition to the state ideology. In addition, it is also the case that this *adat* is very vulnerable to appropriation by the government. Subsidies from the government are obviously an incentive for the leaders of IKBBSA to hold ethnic meetings and festivals. In order to obtain the subsidies, they follow the government guidance of the way of *adat* and emphasise dances, music and songs, which were only a part of their ancestral rituals, as *adat*. Now, *adat* as an embodiment of their spirit of resistance exclusively belonging to the Suku Asli community is declining. Instead, it is becoming a part of the diversity of Indonesian ‘culture’, which the state admits and can control through appropriation.

However, simultaneously, it also offers a new conceptualisation of the meaning and consolidation of the Suku Asli identity beyond various distinctions within their community. First, as a result of *adat* connected with dance and song, *adat* becomes related to more people in everyday life. For example, in Teluk Pambang, the dancers at weddings are young girls. While they were not concerned with the *adat* of the ancestral worship, they become the bearers of Suku Asli *adat* through their participation in music and dance. For the audiences, whereas music and dance were only performances undertaken at wedding ceremonies, now they are seen as their own *adat* inherited from their ancestors, and this brings about a confirmation of their identity as the Suku Asli. Second, the new emphasis on *adat* enables them to fill the gap in identities derived from distinct descent. *Peranakan* Suku Asli conduct their

ancestral rituals in the *peranakan*/Chinese way, and these are difficult to express as *adat* because they clearly belong to foreign Chinese culture. However, in terms of *adat* as music and dance, they can actually participate in *adat* through their mutual cooperation with ‘real’ Suku Asli, and they can insist that they actually have Suku Asli *adat* in their communication with outsiders. By participating in dance and music as *adat*, they can consolidate their identity as Suku Asli and leave aside their ambiguous and ambivalent identity as *peranakan* which is potentially somewhat risky in Indonesian politics. Finally, through their participation in *adat*, ordinary villagers are involved in the political activities of IKBBSA. Although they are not really related to the political activity of IKBBSA, they are actively joining in dance and music. This results in reinforcing the organisation. Although some leaders monopolise the political and economic activities in IKBBSA, all members of the community can equally share the aesthetic activities as either performers or audiences. This quality contributes to the consolidation of Suku Asli identity beyond the social distinctions of generation, gender, descent and political power. Suku Asli leaders actively adopt this definition, and *adat* that is abstracted and embodied in ‘art’ comes to be a symbol of their identification as Suku Asli.

On the one hand, the culturalisation of *adat* has disempowered local legal systems and transformed *adat* into harmless culture. This is the case also among the Suku Asli; *adat* that was the embodiment of their boundary with Muslims has transformed into ‘art’. On the other hand, it also has the power to connect the people concerned and consolidate the diverse identities among the locals through participation in the manifestation of the culture. Because the culturalisation involves the latter aspect, even though the local communities experienced the disempowerment of *adat* between the colonial and Suharto eras, *adat* in local communities have been revived as a symbol of local solidarity and self-determination in the post-Suharto era. In particular, tribespeople, who may often have segmentary and uncentralised social structures and flexible and diffuse *adat*, can be consolidated by culturalisation.

This process is not necessarily seen as construction or invention of their tradition because they actually have had these constituents of their *adat* – dance and music – in their practice of ancestral worship. Therefore, their way of conceptualising *adat*

can be seen as a process of objectification and abstraction of their flexible and diffuse traditional practices in the government framework of *adat*. By doing so, they are integrating their diverse traditional practices and reinforcing their identity as Suku Asli in relation to the state.

Again, *adat* is the basic component of the Indonesian version of ‘indigenous movement’ – that is, the quest for ‘*adat* communities’. Although activists and local authorities may emphasise the ‘revival’ of *adat* – that is, local tradition and authenticity, it is framed in engagement with historical government policies. Indigeneity emerges in such engagement, and the local community indigenises themselves in relation to the image of being ‘indigenous’ held by the state.

In a similar way to *adat*, Suku Asli tried to objectify and abstract their whole religious practices in relation to state religious policies in Indonesia. In the next chapter, I explore the process of adoption, objectification, abstraction and integration of their *agama*, i.e. religion recognised by the state, in Suku Asli society.

Chapter 6

Creation of Homogeneity: Religion (*Agama*), Buddhism and Abstraction

In the previous chapters, I described the processes whereby the Suku Asli conceptualised and embodied their ancestral space, political organisation and the concept of *adat* in accordance with the state image of how they should be. In addition, religion or *agama*⁵⁰ has been increasingly an important factor in constituting their ethnic identity as Suku Asli in recent years. This has occurred through the implementation of the government's religious policies.

In Indonesia, identifying one's *agama* is very important in civil life. The state has a national principle of 'Belief in one God (*Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*)' in the five philosophical foundations of the Indonesian state, the Pancasila. People are obliged to register their chosen religion from one of six *agama*, i.e. Islam, Catholic (*Katolik; Kristen*), Protestant (*Protestan*), Hindu, Buddhism and Confucianism. *Agama* is addressed on various official documents such as ID cards (KTP) and marriage certificates, and it constitutes an essential part of one's citizenship. Also, in school curricula, *agama* is a compulsory subject, and children learn the history and doctrine of the *agama* that they chose. These policies have been developed under the initiatives of Muslims (and some Christians), who have been the overwhelming majority and are dominant in post-independence Indonesia.

The people who had converted to Islam and Christianity before independence could identify their own *agama* relatively easily. However, people who had been neither Muslim nor Christian and conducted traditional religious practices, i.e. *adat*, confronted the necessity to show their *agama* in response to Pancasila politics. Two powerful ethnic groups, the Balinese and ethnic Chinese, succeeded in having their traditional religions recognised as *agama* just after independence (Picard 201; Tsuda 2012; Brown 1987). Some people have tried to legitimise their *adat* as *agama* by

⁵⁰ '*Agama*' is generally translated as 'religion'. However, I use the term '*agama*' with the strong implication of political construction and monotheism in state politics, distinguished from 'religion' or 'religious practices and beliefs' that have been practised in each local community.

fitting their *adat* into the state image of *agama*. For example, after the 1970s, *adat* among the Ngaju Dayak in central Kalimantan and the Wana in Sulawesi were reformulated as having monotheistic doctrines and were recognised as versions of Hinduism (Schiller 1996; Atkinson 1983). On the other hand, some people adopted one of the established faiths. For instance, the Sakai have been involved in a wave of Islamisation and many Sakai identify themselves as Muslim (Porath 2004), while the Forest Tobelo in central Halmahera converted to Christianity in the 1980s and accepted the American-based New Tribal Mission (Duncan 2003).

In any case, the *adat* of each local community has confronted the necessity to transform itself because of implementation of religious policies, as *agama* often intervenes in religious practices and beliefs based on *adat* (Schiller 1996; Kipp & Rodgers 1987). The Suku Asli also confronted the serious necessity of adjusting the relationship between *adat* and national *agama* after IKBBSA was established. This is because, in the process of claiming their position as Suku Asli, the leaders have had more opportunities to explain to government officials what Suku Asli *agama* is. However, this was very difficult because they have two forms of religious practices based on ‘real’ and *peranakan* traditions. In this situation, Suku Asli have tried to integrate their *agama* into Buddhism by redefining the concepts of *agama* and other religious practices based on their cultural logic in order to show the legitimacy of it in relation to the national law. How have they conceptualised and embodied *agama* and what kind of social change does this bring about? This is the question that I try to answer.

In this chapter, I describe the Suku Asli conceptualisation of *agama* and its influences on their community, focusing especially on the process of interactions between *agama* and *adat* in their world. First, I address the historical background of national religious policies and the regional situation in Bengkalis regency. Second, I describe their attitude to and interpretation of *agama*. While they have conceptualised various views of *agama* through the communications with outsiders, the leaders have aspirations to integrate their *agama*. Third, I describe the process of designating Buddhism as their ancestral *agama* in IKBBSA’s activities, and its social influences. Their social association characterised by ‘non-Islamic alliance’ obtains its

substantiality by specifying their ancestral *agama*, and the Suku Asli enter the realm of modernity leaving behind the position of ‘tribespeople’.

Most of the ethnographic facts in this chapter were obtained in my main site, Teluk Pambang, where almost all villagers identify their *agama* as Buddhism. Although I do not have much data on the Christian point of view, I try to describe it based on an interview with a one-time Christian.

Identification of *agama*: Religious policies and the spread of *agama* among the Suku Asli

National religious policies: Agama, state and adat

The Indonesian word, *agama*, is derived from Sanskrit, and was introduced to the Indonesian archipelago during the early centuries of this millennium when the archipelago became an important trading hub between China, India and the Near East (Atkinson 1983: 686). This term originally meant “‘a traditional precept, doctrine, body of precepts, collection of such doctrines’; in short, ‘anything handed down fixed by tradition’” (Gonda 1973: 499). Therefore, in its original sense, *agama* is not so different from *adat*. The elites in the pre-colonial kingdoms actively accepted the word because they used the Sanskrit language as a sign of their spiritual political power, though it was not really related to ordinary people and their lives (Kipp & Rogers 1987: 15).

However, the meaning of *agama* was changed and politicised after the nineteenth century when the state tried to control local religious practices and beliefs (Atkinson 1983: 686-689). The religious policies in the colonial era emerged in the system of interactions between Christianity and Islam. In the latter half of the nineteenth century when the Dutch colonial government attempted to tighten its control over the archipelago, Islam was considered as a main source of resistance. Therefore, the government permitted and encouraged missionaries in non-Muslim areas for the purpose of making up Christian enclaves or ‘buffers’ (Kipp & Rodgers 1987: 16). Then, during the Japanese occupation in the 1940s, the Japanese colonial

government supported Islamic organisations, i.e. *Masyumi*, because they regarded Muslims as nationalists who resisted the Dutch Christian authority. These Islamic organisations continued as major political parties after independence (Tsing 1987: 196). Through these colonial policies, *agama* gradually became something related to state independence and the lives of local populations.

After independence, the importance of *agama* dramatically increased. The Pancasila was first declared in a speech by Sukarno in 1945.⁵¹ The Pancasila included five principles, i.e. Belief in One God, Nationalism, Humanism, Democracy and Social Justice (Kipp & Rodgers 1987: 17). The belief in one *agama* was also addressed in the statements of the constitution. Through these processes, *agama* became a foundation of the new nation state and associated with social order and citizenship.

In parallel with the process of codifying the importance of *agama* in the Pancasila and Constitution, the bureaucracy elaborated the meaning of *agama*. The main agent was the ministry of religious affairs, which was established under the initiative of Muslim leaders in 1946. In 1952, this ministry designated the meaning of *agama* – ‘the prerequisite elements of a prophet, a holy book, and international recognition’ (Tsing 1987: 197). Then, in 1959, the ministry put forward the definition involving belief in one God as a unified principle of life (Kim 1998: 363). These definitions were obviously reflecting the monotheism of Islam and Christianity. Michael Picard summarises its main elements as follows:

While the word *agama* in Indonesia is commonly translated as ‘religion’, it is a peculiar combination of a Christian view of what counts as a world religion with an Islamic understanding of what defines a proper religion - divine revelation recorded by a prophet in a holy book, a system of law for the community of believers, congregational worship, and a belief in the One and Only God. (2011: 483)

Between the 1940s and the 1950s, the government encouraged people who did not belong to one of the two *agamas* to demonstrate the legitimacy of their religious practices and beliefs. In response to this political atmosphere, the Balinese claimed

⁵¹ Although the words, ‘Belief in one God’, were the fifth principle at the beginning, they were then given the first position after controversies between Muslims and non-Muslims (Kim 1998: 357).

their traditional religious practices and beliefs as Hinduism by constructing an image of being monotheistic, having a prophet, a holy book and a codified system of law, and gaining international recognition and believers outside Bali (Geertz 1973; Picard 2011: 497). The ethnic Chinese also approached the government to recognise their faiths as *agama*. On the one hand, some ethnic Chinese who followed Buddhism sent their leaders to Burma to learn Buddhism, and established a religious body elaborating their doctrine as a 'world religion' (Brown 1987). On the other hand, the practitioners of Chinese folk religions based on Chinese temples (*klenteng*) were integrated as Confucianism under a particular religious body. Although such temples enshrined the various deities of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, the body designated *Tiang Gong* as the supreme God (Tsuda 2012). After numerous controversies in terms of the definition of *agama*, a Sukarno-era presidential decree (No. 1/1965 on the Prevention of Abuse and/or Disrespect of Religion) recognised six legitimate *agama*, i.e. Islam, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Buddhism and Confucianism in Indonesia (Salim 2007:116).

While the importance of *agama* arose in the government politics of the new Nation State, discrimination and marginalisation against those who did not or could not register their *agama* gradually formed in the state atmosphere. In post-independence Indonesia, such people were regarded as 'people who do not yet have *agama* (*orang belum beragama*)' or 'people who believe in animism (*animisme*)' (Kipp & Rodgers 1987: 21-25; Atkinson 1983). The expression 'not yet' of the former phrase involves the implications of 'an inevitability about the future of these people' (Kipp & Rodgers 1987: 21). On the other hand, 'animism', which as a notion would have been introduced to Indonesian archipelago in the late Dutch colonial era, is associated with an emphasis on anthropomorphism and the implication that 'all natural phenomena have soul'; it also encompasses the implications of Western evolutionism (Tsintjilonis 2004: 427). In particular, in the context of Indonesia, this term is used as the antonym of monotheisms that are legitimated by the state. Thus, the people who were labelled as 'animists' were regarded as not believing in one God, and should come to believe in an *agama* in accordance with their progress and civilisation. Either way, the people who maintained their traditional forms of

religious practices and beliefs without the identification of one *agama* were connected with the image of being ‘backward’ and ‘primitive’.

In addition to this negative image, the marginalisation of and discrimination against people who did not claim their own *agama* dramatically increased in the rise of the anti-communist movement in the 1960s. The communists were regarded as having a strong connection with atheism, so people who did not identify with an *agama* were regarded as communists and a threat to the state. In the anti-communist purge between 1965 and 1966, these people became the main target of oppression. After this event, people who did not specify their *agama* rushed to register it at the government offices (Kipp & Rodgers 1987: 19).⁵² In some areas, mass conversion to Christianity occurred (Kipp & Rogers 1987: 19). Furthermore, one of the recognised *agama*, Confucianism, was dropped from the list of legitimate *agama* in 1967 because it was regarded as having strong relationships with communism (Kim 1998:360; Salim 2007: 116). Many ethnic Chinese, who had registered their *agama* as Confucianism, converted to being Buddhist or Christian or at least identified themselves as such (Tsuda 2012: 393; Yang Heriyanto 2005: 3).

It is noteworthy that Confucianism was recognised as *agama* again around 2000 by the central government (Yang Heriyanto 2005: 6). However, at the local government level, it is not recognised in practice. As far as I know, I have never met any Suku Asli or ethnic Chinese who had ID cards of Confucianism or claimed the legitimacy of Confucianism in the Bengkalis regency.

During the Suharto regime, these religious ideologies were enforced through various policies. On national ID cards, a column for ‘*agama*’ was provided, and people had to fill it in. In 1974, a statute on marriage was enacted. This law ordained that marriages should be conducted under the rules of a couple’s *agama* (Yang Heriyanto 2005: 3), and their *agama* is stated on the actual marriage certificates (see Chapter 4). Thus *agama* became the essential identity in people’s citizenship. Also, *agama* plays an essential role in school education. For example, in 1985, it was announced that students progressing from primary school to high school had to take

⁵² While some regulations in terms of *agama* have loosened in the post-Suharto era, the discrimination in terms of atheism, polytheism and animism remains. In particular, atheism is still regarded as having a relationship with communism, and, indeed, one who had declared his atheism was being put to the test in 2013 (Paker & Hoon 2013: 159).

compulsory classes on *agama*. The ‘new curriculum’, which was put into practice in 1994, states that elementary school children have to attend *agama* classes for two hours a week (Schiller 1996: 410). In 2013, the government decided to increase the hours of religious education in school, as ‘more religious instruction is needed because a lack of moral development has led to an increase in violence and vandalism among youths, and that could fuel social unrest and corruption in the future’ (New York Times 2013). Generally, in government schemes, religious education has been associated with the moral development of children. As a result, *agama* was associated with nationalism and social order, and identifying an *agama* became essential in civic life in Indonesia.

The national concept of *agama* required people to assert one of the recognised universal *agama* associated with Indonesian nationalism, social order and morals. Therefore, this can be seen as partly contradicting the concepts of *adat* or ‘*adat* community’ that are associated with locality and diversity. Therefore, not only followers of Hinduism and Buddhism, but also ones of Christianity and Islam have to adjust the relationship between *adat* and *agama* through controversies and political actions, while, at a practical level, religious practices and *adat* are difficult to separate (Schiller 1996: 410).

Just after independence, the ideology of state religious politics was not concerned with the Suku Asli who lived in a peripheral area; nor had they the political power to claim their traditional religious practices as an *agama*. They had been categorised as ‘people who do not yet have *agama*’, and indeed they did not identify their practices as an *agama*. However, through the anti-communist purge and the corresponding political requirements for citizenship and education, they confronted the necessity to show they too had an *agama* – an *agama* they started to construct in and through their involvement with the state and the quest for development.

Contacts with agama: Passivity and contingency

It is uncertain what meaning the term ‘*agama*’ had in the Siak kingdom and Utan communities before the mid-nineteenth century. However, it seems likely that the

term was used generally as a synonym of Islam because, in this region, Islam was overwhelmingly predominant and, even if there were Christians, only a few Dutch settlers and North Sumatran (Batak) immigrants were its followers. Therefore, in Utan communities, the term *agama* would not have been used, and even if they had used it, it would have been a synonym for Islam. They did not have contact with Christianity or Buddhism, which could be counterposed with Islam. Only after the 1970s, did Christian missionaries go into their settlements⁵³ and Buddhist followers become organised in this region. On the other hand, the Utan must have recognised that religious practices and beliefs were related to their social status in the state. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, they were categorised as the lowest class in the Siak kingdom because they were not Muslim. Some Utan communities converted to Islam and obtained the higher status of Malay. In any case, while the concept *agama* may have been more or less important only in their communication with the Malays, it did not have any importance in their communities.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the diffusion of the ethnic Chinese population was accelerated from towns to rural areas as a result of the introduction of the *panglong* system. While there would have been some Chinese temples, or *klenteng*, before the nineteenth century, they were concentrated in towns such as Bengkalis and Selat Panjang where many Chinese traders lived and established their communities. However, as a result of immigration, the immigrants established *klenteng* in the rural areas as well, and some were founded in the areas where the Utan and Akit lived. Such well-known old *klenteng* built in this period include those in Titi Akar, Rupert Island, and Selat Akar, Padang Island. In this process, the Utan and Akit had contact with Chinese folk religions that would be legitimised and then banned as Confucianism. However, it is improbable that they described Chinese folk religion as *agama* in a way similar to the present meaning, because, in this period, Chinese folk religion was foreign culture and the Islamic Malays would not have intervened in their religious practices.

⁵³ Considering the situation of Christian missionaries in Indonesia, the introduction of Christianity to Suku Asli society seems to have been late. There would have been some missionaries who went into their society early on. However, I have never heard such stories from Suku Asli informants and, even if some had tried to missionise Suku Asli before the 1970s, the influences were minimal.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Suku Asli accepted some elements of Chinese religion, mainly ancestral worship and offerings for local spirits, through the collaboration with *peranakan* over ritual in their everyday life. However, worshipping at *klenteng* was something outside their everyday life. First, the various *klenteng* were sustained by mutual aid and donations within each Chinese community, the members of which were generally traders (*touke*) and their Chinese subjects, who spoke Chinese, and identified themselves as Chinese. The ‘real’ Suku Asli did not live in such communities. Second, in *klenteng*, people pray for various Chinese deities in order to achieve ‘secular’ desires such as the success of business and the safety of family. This worship was separated from ancestral worship, and the *peranakan* Suku Asli did not have an obligation to perform this unlike ancestral worship. *Klenteng* thus did not become the place of worship for ‘real’ or *peranakan* Suku Asli. Even today, it completely depends on individual choices whether one joins in or not. Some *peranakan* Suku Asli who maintain strong social relationships with ethnic Chinese may often join the worship at *klenteng*. However, most ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli do not participate in this worship.

Just after independence, most of the *peranakan* Chinese and some *peranakan* Suku Asli registered their *agama* as Confucianism. However, before the 1970s, there were few Suku Asli who had fully completed their administrative registration, and so they did not identify their *agama*. A turning point, then, came after the anti-communist purge and the start of Suharto’s New Order regime. In accordance with the rise of political pressures to register their *agama* and the prohibition of Confucianism, they confronted the necessity to choose one of the other *agama*. Although Islam was not a choice as they had maintained their identity and position as ‘non-Muslims’, their choice varied from community to community (or even from person to person).

Some Suku Asli registered their *agama* as Buddhism. Just after Confucianism was prohibited, a Buddhist community of ethnic Chinese began their activities in Bengkalis town, and was recognised by the regency government in 1971. This community, Maitreya Great Tao, was the first and only Buddhist community in this region, which was originally established in Taiwan in the twentieth century and introduced to Indonesia in the 1940s by a Taiwanese (Brown 1990: 115). In Taiwan,

this community is known as *Yi Guan Dao*, or Unity Sect, a new religious movement that incorporates elements of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism. Yet, this religion is recognised as Buddhism in Indonesia. Between the 1970s and the 1980s, this community rapidly spread through Indonesia and obtained many believers among the ethnic Chinese (Brown 1990). While they have a supreme God (*Tuhan*), this God is not the direct recipient of one's devotion. Instead, Buddha Maitreya, which God sent to the human world, is the main objective of their devotion. This Buddha is represented in the figure of Budai which has been worshipped as one of the deities of wealth in Chinese folk religion, and has actually been enshrined in many *klenteng* in Indonesia. Therefore, this sect of Buddhism has strong connections with Confucianism, and took the role of a shelter for the Confucians when Confucianism was prohibited. Many ethnic Chinese and some the *peranakan* Suku Asli who had identified with Confucians changed their *agama* to Buddhism.

It is notable that, because Buddhism and these Chinese folk religions are historically associated, believers recognise their similarity. Although this community had an organisation and doctrine which fitted with the concept of *agama*, present-day Suku Asli and ethnic Chinese may still use 'Buddhism' as a synonym for 'Confucianism' and vice-versa. Furthermore, this community permitted the worship of a Chinese folk religion. For example, in a temple of this Buddhist community, *vihara*, at Selat Panjang, a large icon of Guan Yu (*Kuan-tei*), which is one of the most popular deities of wealth in Chinese folk religion and often enshrined in *klenteng* in Indonesia, is enshrined together with that of Buddha Maitreya. In addition, as this Buddhist community obtained many Chinese believers in its first stages and accepted the diversity of rituals, they did not actively engage in missionary work. Therefore, Suku Asli could identify themselves as Buddhists without any pressure from the Buddhist community to be 'real' Buddhists. It is much later that this Buddhist community established some *vihara* in Suku Asli settlements. In Teluk Pambang, a temple was first established in 2001. In this situation, more and more Suku Asli have identified themselves as Buddhists.

On the other hand, quite a few Suku Asli converted to Christianity when the government increased the pressure to identify *agama* after the 1970s. Various Christian missionaries went into Suku Asli communities. For example, Catholic

churches were established in the villages of Kelamatan and Bantan Air in the 1970s; a Pentecostal missionary began activities in Selat Baru in 1987. These churches eagerly engaged in missionary activities offering support such as medical care, instruction on agricultural techniques and the organisation of collective labour. As a result, missionaries obtained a certain number of converts in each community. Some people, who lived in different settlements but had relations with Christians, also converted to Christianity, and accepted their exhortations.

However, many Christian Suku Asli later changed their *agama* to Buddhism. This is because, according to them, ‘church prohibited our *adat*’. This *adat* means both ways of ancestral worship, i.e. ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli ways. For example, missionaries required them to conduct funerals and marriages under the management of the church, and encouraged the *peranakan* Suku Asli to throw away the altars which were in their houses for ancestral worship. Many Suku Asli rejected such interventions in their ancestral religious practices and beliefs. The church of Selat Baru retained most of the believers by permitting some of the Suku Asli traditional ways to continue. However, this was rather an exceptional case. In Bantan Air, the church lost most of its converts and retreated before the 1990s. In Kelamatan, while the church has been maintained, only a few dozen households are still Christians. In Teluk Pambang, although a church of the Batak Christian Protestant Church was established in 2001, it retreated within one year as the villagers had already identified with Buddhists and it could not obtain any following at all.

The choice of agama in government policies

The concrete government policies, which drove Suku Asli to identify with Buddhism, were mainly of two kinds. The first one was concerned with the administrative register. According to Pak Koding, the village officials visited Suku Asli houses in the 1970s and 1980s, and questioned the details of family members and their *agama* repeatedly. At this time, many Suku Asli who had not identified with an *agama* were registered as Buddhists by the officials who pointed out their

kinship with Chinese Buddhists. Second, the identification with an *agama* is necessary for children's education. From around the 1980s, every Suku Asli child began to go to primary school. In school, all students have to register their *agama* and take the compulsory classes in religious education. During my fieldwork, for example, children took religious education for three hours a week in school classes, and went to *vihara* every Sunday where they were taught about history, doctrine and the devotions of Buddhism for three hours. Under these government policies, Suku Asli were identified as Buddhists.

While they fully registered their *agama* as Buddhism, their devotion to the Buddhist community is limited. For example, the religious community requires believers to conduct temple services at *vihara* three times a day, ideally. However, I have never seen any of my informants, adult Suku Asli, going to *vihara* for the purpose of a temple service. Also, this community encourages believers to be vegetarians. However, meat and fish have been and still are essential foods for Suku Asli villagers.

Their choice of *agama* at the beginning of their identification with it seems to have been characterised by their passivity and a degree of contingency. Those who had had social ties with the ethnic Chinese chose Confucianism, those who had lived in a settlement where a Christian church organised itself became Christians, and others were identified as Buddhists often by village officials. However, after their first choice, Suku Asli began identifying with Buddhists, because Confucianism was banned and the Christian church 'prohibited their *adat*'. As a result, most Suku Asli in Bengkalis Island identify themselves as Buddhists at present, except for some Christian 'enclaves' where the churches are maintained. Yet their identification as Buddhists is not based on their positive conversion to the doctrine of Buddhism, at least, from the perspective of the definition of *agama*. They rarely join the activities at *vihara*. Rather, it is based on their attachment to their traditional ways and practices, their *adat*, which only Buddhism permitted without restrictions. This can be seen as a similar process to their rejection of Islam. They have continuously rejected converting to Islam since the pre-colonial era in order to maintain ancestral worship inherited from their ancestors, or *adat* (see Chapter 2).

However, their recognition of *agama* is changing. Its passive and contingent character is transforming into a positive and necessary one. Suku Asli leaders have begun regarding Buddhism as the exclusive and authentic ancestral *agama* of Suku Asli, and after IKBBSA was established, identifying with Buddhism has become an essential criterion of IKBBSA membership.

Stance and Interpretation of the concept *agama*

Agama, kepercayaan and adat: a 'real' Suku Asli view

Let me scrutinise the stance toward and interpretation of the concept *agama* among Suku Asli villagers before describing the process in which Buddhism became the *agama* of the Suku Asli. The stance and interpretation varies even within a single community. This is not because the significance of *agama* varies among individuals, but because they had to engage with the different backgrounds of religious practices and beliefs, i.e. 'real' and *peranakan* forms of religious practices and beliefs. Furthermore, the leaders of IKBBSA take a firmer stance on *agama* because they have been involved in the political and cultural communications with the government. I describe Odang's view of *agama*. He was a 'real' Suku Asli and did not engage in the political communications with the government. Therefore, his comments reflect the general view of *agama* among the 'real' Suku Asli without the influences of the recent political movement. Moreover, his comments seem to be more in tune with the historical facts described above than other views that I will describe, and many Suku Asli would agree with his opinion.

One day, I talked with Pak Odang sitting on the floor of a living room in his house. He was repairing his fishing net with a needle and lines. While I was thinking about what I should ask him, I glimpsed a poster on the wall of the room. This poster was distributed by the Buddhist community, Maitreya Great Tao, and I had seen it several times in Suku Asli houses. The poster showed an icon of Buddha Maitreya with some slogans in Chinese characters. Indeed, Pak Odang identified himself as a

Buddhist and as a member of the Buddhist community just like many other villagers in Teluk Pambang.

Looking at the poster, I asked him, ‘What was the *agama* of Suku Asli before Buddhism came?’ He paused in his work, and appeared to catch me looking at the poster. He answered: ‘It was animism (*animisme*). We worshipped (*sembayang*) trees, rivers, forests and so on.’ According to him, his father had an ID card which described his *agama* as ‘Animism’. When Pak Odang first obtained his own ID card, it stated his *agama* as ‘Buddhism’. Although his explanation was convincing to a certain extent, his attitude of seeing their worship of the natural world as something in the past was slightly strange to me. This is because they still saw ‘souls’ in natural phenomena in an anthropomorphic way and practiced rituals for them. For example, in shamanic séances, they communicated with the spirits living in rivers, trees and forests. Also, they held rituals at sacred places, i.e. *keramat* or *datuk kong*, in which they provided offerings for the spirits living in that place. Worshipping the souls of the natural world was not a past practice but a present one. Pointing out these facts, I attempted to confirm it with him by asking: ‘Don’t Suku Asli really believe in animism anymore?’ He asserted ‘No, animism was our *agama* just in the past. We believe in Buddhism now.’ He continued:

We register our *agama* as Buddhism now. And, we believe the existence of Buddha as God (*Tuhan*) in our heart (*dalam hati*). It’s enough, we are Buddhists. [...] In the past, we did not know Buddhism. Therefore, our *agama* was animism. [...] Rituals for the spirits (*datuk*) are not *agama*. It’s *percaya*an (‘belief’). *Percaya*an and *agama* are different. There are such *percaya*an even among Muslims just like Suku Asli.

According to him, the *peranakan*’s offerings at the altar are also *percaya*an, not *agama*. Although the discussion as to whether one ‘really’ believes in an *agama* or not can often be a sensitive topic in Indonesia, he gave these comments looking relaxed as usual. For him, ‘real’ belief in Buddhism was not a sensitive topic that was concerned with his identity. Then, I questioned the relationship between *agama* and ceremonies (*acara*) such as marriages and funerals. He said ‘the ceremonies are not *agama* either. It is *adat* that have been inherited from our ancestors.’

He stated that Suku Asli *agama* in the past was ‘animism’. It was a general tendency that, while *peranakan* Suku Asli identified their past *agama* as Confucianism, ‘real’ Suku Asli often identified it as ‘animism’ or say: ‘We did not have *agama*’. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the ways of rituals among ‘real’ Suku Asli and *peranakan* ones are different, and the *peranakan* way was often described as Confucianism. For ‘real’ Suku Asli, Confucianism is the way of the *peranakan*, not their own. Therefore, ‘real’ Suku Asli do not consider Confucianism as their past *agama* or associated Confucianism with Buddhism. The term ‘animism’, which was obviously introduced to their society in post-independence state policies, has negative meanings of ‘backwardness’ or ‘primitiveness’ in Suku Asli society the same as in government circles. Despite this, the reason why he identified with ‘animism’ was, on the one hand, because of the fact that he had seen the ID card of his father. On the other hand, it was also true there was no proper term to express their religious practices and beliefs other than ‘animism’, though the rituals among *peranakan* could be summarised under the term Confucianism. Therefore, he described their past *agama* as ‘animism’ in the same way as the government, emphasising it had been something that belongs in the past.

More importantly, Pak Odang categorised their rituals in terms of the natural spirits as ‘*percayaan*’ and ceremonies as ‘*adat*’ differentiating them from ‘*agama*’. ‘*Agama*’ does not indicate all religious practices and beliefs. Rather, its meaning is limited. *Agama* is first and foremost something concerned with administrative registration. His ID card labelled his *agama* as Buddhism, and his child, a primary school pupil, was learning Buddhism in school and going to a *vihara* every Sunday. These were the only reasons why he identified himself as Buddhist. Their *agama* emerges in a limited sphere of their everyday life. Therefore, his statement that he believes in Buddha ‘in his heart’ was by no means a declaration of his pious belief in Buddha, but showed his ceremonial or performative attitude to Buddhism. His expression has the implication that he does not practice any devotions, rituals or vegetarianism for Buddha in his life but he believes in it only ‘in his heart’. It is ‘enough’ to identify himself as a Buddhist. Even if it is only ceremonial and performative, this expression seems to be very effective for persuading the government officials or Muslims who ask about his *agama*, because although it is

minimal, it is a sufficient explanation to show their belief in one God. In the situation that he needed to show the identification with an *agama*, he would have employed this manner of explanation in conversations with outsiders. Still, his belief in Buddhism is political and belongs in the religious politics imposed on Suku Asli.

On the other hand, he categorised other rituals in everyday life as '*adat*' and '*percaya*an'. Why did he distinguish the two categories? Why did he associate weddings and funerals with *adat* and shamanic rituals with *percaya*an? In short, these categories have been moulded by the government definition of *agama*, and he did it this way to fit in with the government image and to avoid them becoming problematic in local politics.

First, in terms of the relationship between *agama* and *percaya*an, he categorised the rituals for natural spirits as *percaya*an. Although he described the rituals for the spirits as '*percaya*an (or *kepercaya*an in formal Indonesian)' at this time, shamanic séances and sacrifice for the natural spirits were more often referred to as '*ilmu batin* (or *kebatinan*)' (see Chapter 2).⁵⁴ These terms were originally conceptualised in the controversies about the definition of *agama* at the national political level in Java. In 1955, scattered 'mystical' groups primarily among the Javanese established *Badan Kongres Kebatinan Indonesia* (BKKI; Indonesian *Kebatinan* Organisation).⁵⁵ This organisation tried to have the government recognise *kebatinan* as an *agama* in the same way as Islam and Christianity (Kim 1998: 363; Kipp & Rodgers 1987: 27). Although *kebatinan* has not been officially recognised, they avoided being labelled as communists during the anti-communist purge, and flourished during the New Order. The movement has attracted many government authorities and military leaders (Kipp & Rodgers 1987: 27). As for '*kepercaya*an', this term was also associated with 'tribal religion' like 'animism' and differentiated from *agama* in

⁵⁴ The words '*ilmu batin* (or *ilmu kebatinan*)' in Suku Asli dialect seem to be derived from '*kebatinan*' in Indonesian. However, Suku Asli do not recognise it. '*Batin*' means 'inner' in Arabic and '*kebatinan*' is an abstracted form of the word, and the term in Indonesian is thus translated as '(supernatural) internal power' or more often 'mysticism'. However, in Suku Asli dialect, *batin* means first and foremost, their traditional headman. Therefore, they are recognising '*ilmu batin*' as 'headman's technique' vaguely. Probably, the Indonesian expression '*ilmu kebatinan*' was introduced to Suku Asli society in the last several decades in the communication with the Malays or Javanese, and they connected it with their traditional headman later.

⁵⁵ Although it is difficult to define the word '*kebatinan*', it can be summarised as 'mysticism' or 'a belief system which mixes indigenous religious elements with influences of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, and emphasizes the Human spirituality' (Kim 1998: 363).

government religious policies (Kipp & Rodgers 1987: 21; Tsing 1987: 197). However, the word has been continuously used as a simple translation of 'beliefs' with some connotation of local, individual and even superstitious ones. Although 'Confucianism' and 'animism' have been associated with negative meanings such as 'communism', 'backwardness' or 'primitiveness', *percaya*an' and *kebatinan*' are relatively neutral and acceptable words in Indonesia, insofar as the terms do not violate the official definition of *agama*. Odang's expression of *percaya*an' is an acceptable expression when he uses it to explain the meaning of their rituals to outsiders. In other words, these terms are used to indicate practices and beliefs at the essentially vague boundary between legitimate *agama* and illegitimate non-*agama* rituals.

Second, in terms of the relationship between *agama* and *adat*, Anne Schiller (1996) describes the process of the conceptualisation of *agama* among the Ngaju Dayak. While they were regarded as people who 'do not yet have *agama*', they succeeded in having the government recognise their *adat* as a variety of Hinduism, *Hindu Kaharingan*, in the 1980s. According to her, although their *agama* was involved in *adat*, government policies separated the conceptual categories of *adat* and *agama* based on their definitions in state policies. However, this seems not to be the case in Suku Asli society. This is because, as I mentioned in Chapter 5, not only *agama* but also the *adat* of Suku Asli were formulated, or at least dramatically changed, through communications with the state or outsiders. The conceptualisations began in the mid-nineteenth century when the Utan were subsumed under state control. Before then, they would have just practised their own ways of life in every sphere. However, through the increasing communications with the ethnic Chinese and the state policies in terms of *adat* and *agama*, when they organised rituals in terms of ancestral spirits in the category of *adat* (see Chapter 5), they placed the rituals for the natural spirits in the category of '*kepercaya*an' or '*ilmu batin*' by not employing the terms '*agama*' and '*adat*' that the government designated. They can discuss their practices 'only in the terms imposed from without' (Acciaioli 1985: 158).

The conceptualisation of agama in dialogue: A peranakan view

The second example is a *peranakan* view. Pak Kiat was in his mid-forties and a *peranakan* Suku Asli. He was the head of my host family. He took on the role of secretary of IKBBSA, but his participation in communications with the government officials was limited. The *peranakan* are often more sensitive about the topic of *agama* than the ‘real’ Suku Asli. This is because, from their perspective, they actually had their *agama*, Confucianism, in the past, and they strongly reject being categorised as people having ‘animism’ or ‘no *agama*’, which Muslims often describe the Suku Asli as. Pak Kiat identified himself as Buddhist. But, in contrast to Odang’s explanation, he thought that Suku Asli *agama* in the past had been Confucianism; in addition, he categorised their everyday worship at the altar as *agama*, Buddhism, as explained below.

During my stay at his house, Pak Kiat sometimes poured out the complaints against doubts among the Javanese concerning Suku Asli Buddhism. According to him, his Javanese acquaintances living in a different village often asked whether the Suku Asli ‘really’ believed in Buddhism. One day, he told me a story about one such question. According to him,

When I was talking with a Javanese, he asked me ‘Why don’t Suku Asli go to *vihara* for devotion (*sembayang*)?’ So, I answered ‘I am praying to Buddha every day in my house’. [...] I know they often say ‘Suku Asli *agama* is *agama* for altar (*agama tepekong*)’. But we are actually real Buddhists.

The Javanese on Bengkalis Island were generally pious and went to mosque several times a day for the purpose of devotions. They thought such behaviour was a necessary attitude for the believers of an *agama*. Therefore, the question to Pak Kiat involved not only curiosity, but also some accusation and disdain of Suku Asli attitudes to *agama*. In response to it, he answered: ‘I am praying to Buddha every day in my house’. As he was a *peranakan* Suku Asli, he had an altar that enshrines his ancestral spirits and a Chinese deity. Indeed, he prayed in front of it, burning incense stick three times a day. By demonstrating this everyday worship, he tried to show that he really had an *agama* and this *agama* was Buddhism. However, in

general, such worship was not acceptable for the Javanese sense of *agama*, because they often knew that altars enshrined a deity derived from China and their ancestors, and it was not necessarily related to one God and Buddhism. Therefore, the Javanese called ‘Suku Asli *agama*, an *agama* for altar’ poking fun at it as worship for altars, not devotion to God.

Pak Kiat has often experienced similar questions from the Javanese, who often tried to point out the variance between the doctrines of Buddhism and Suku Asli religious practices, such as those involving beliefs in one God, vegetarianism and so on. At each opportunity, he tried to persuade them by emphasising that Suku Asli were really Buddhists who associated Buddhism with their worship of the ancestral spirits and Chinese deities. However, his explanation did not fit in with the strict doctrines of the Buddhist community. Although the Buddhist community permitted worship at altars, the religious teachers of the community did not regard it as a part of Buddhism. According to a teacher at a *vihara* in Bengkalis town, the worship at altars is a part of ‘Confucianism’ or ‘Chinese beliefs’ (*percaya-an Tionghua*) rather than Buddhism. Moreover, Pak Kiat knew that the meaning of worship at his altar was not for Buddha. He and other villagers explained to me that altar offerings were meant for their ancestral spirits and the deity (*untuk nenek moyang dan dewa-dewa*) enshrined in the altar, for the purpose of ensuring the safety of the house. Therefore, his association between Buddhism and altar was situational. However, this association was necessary in the communications with Muslims because, again, not identifying himself as a Buddhist may include the affirmation of his ‘primitiveness’, ‘backwardness’ and anti-social personality. Therefore, he tried to explain that Suku Asli everyday worship was a part of an *agama*, not sticking at the strict doctrine and original meaning of what happens at the altar. In other words, in communication with the Javanese over the role of Buddhism, he attempted to embed *agama* in the everyday life of the Suku Asli.

Thus, once they were officially identified with Buddhism, Suku Asli were then required to be ‘real’ Buddhists given the pressure of state religious policies. In their society, this process was not directly caused by government policies, but rather by the everyday relations with Muslims. Through such constant dialogue with Muslims,

they introduced the concept of *agama* or Buddhism to their world, by organising their existing ritual practices in accordance with these concepts.

Although the explanations by Pak Odang and Kiat appear to be different, what they share is that they have tried to embed the national concept of *agama* into their social system. However, the heterogeneity of rituals between ‘real’ and *peranakan* Suku Asli make it difficult to construct a common concept of *agama*, and indeed, there are various interpretation of *agama* in Suku Asli society. It is also remarkable that they both seem to be trying to avoid outsiders’ interventions in rituals. On the one hand, Pak Odang categorised their rituals as something different from *agama* using the terms ‘*percayaan*’ and ‘*adat*’, both of which are acceptable in the government category of *agama*. On the other hand, Pak Kiat tried to associate their rituals based on Chinese folk religion with recognised Buddhism in order to justify them. Emphasising that they ‘have *agama*’ is an essential way to claim their position is not ‘backward’ or ‘primitive’ but is legally acceptable. *Agama* has been something that emerged only in the context of the communications with outsiders, and it did not become problematic within their community.

Jane Atkinson (1983) argues that the definition of *agama* among the Wana of Sulawesi has been constructed through ‘a debate among themselves, with their neighbours, and with the government authorities over what constitutes a religion’ (1983: 684). While she sees the Wana concept of *agama* as constructed in the implementation of government policies and ideology, she places more importance on the influences that situationally emerged in ongoing ‘ideology-charged debates’ between the Wana and others (1983: 685), rather than the influences that emerged in fixed controversies between government policies and their historical practices. As a result of such repeated ‘ideology-charged debates’, the Wana demonstrated their practices, including an assemblage of diet, burial practices, healing rituals and so on, as directly relevant to ‘real’ *agama*, and this resulted in their political action to have such practices recognised by the government.

The ‘ideology-charged debates’ can be seen as an indirect effectuation of ‘governmentality’. Although the government may not directly engage in this operation, the debates with the people who have a specific *agama* can configure beliefs about how wrong the ambiguity of *agama* is and how wrong the lack of

regular religious services is among the people who do not specify an *agama*. Through the ongoing debates with Muslims, Suku Asli have conceptualised the logic of their own *agama*, not necessarily adhering to the ‘true’ precepts of Buddhism. Such debates between Suku Asli and Javanese must have been repeated from the past like Kiat’s experiences. Yet, these debates have not driven ordinary Suku Asli villagers to changing their stance on *agama*. Because the communications between ordinary Suku Asli and Javanese are generally limited, it is sufficient to give a situational explanation for persuading the Javanese, like Kiat’s explanation. Javanese villagers who have continuous communications or friendships with Suku Asli villagers do not provoke Suku Asli in terms of *agama*.

However, the situation of Suku Asli leaders is different. After the establishment of IKBBSA, Suku Asli leaders have had opportunities to specify and explain their *agama* not only to the Javanese villagers but also to government officials much more frequently than ordinary Suku Asli. They confronted the necessity to clearly specify a Suku Asli *agama*. Yet, unlike the Wana, they could not have the government recognise their religious practices as *agama*. This is because, first, they have two distinctive forms of religious practices and beliefs. As mentioned above, an *agama* should have an integrated doctrine, and they cannot show this integration. Second and more importantly, religious practices and beliefs among the *peranakan* Suku Asli were associated with Chinese culture, which were the main targets of the government oppression during the New Order regime. Even though it is possible that Pak Kiat can justify himself by pointing out the association between Buddhism and worship at altars in informal communications with his Javanese acquaintances, it is still impossible to argue for them as the basis of political action in formal communications with the government.

Buddhism as ancestral agama: A leader’s view

The third view of *agama* is a leader’s one. Pak Cingyou was in his late-fifties and the village *batin* of Kembung Luar. His grandfather was the last *batin* recognised by the Siak kingdom before independence, and he was one of the most active leaders

of IKBBSA like Pak Ajui. Although he was a ‘real’ Suku Asli, he had an altar in his house and conducted day-to-day worship. The description comes from my first interview with him. While his opinion seems to be a far-fetched argument, it reflects leaders’ stance towards *agama*.

I talked with Pak Cingyou, sitting in a guest room in his house. After having a chat for a while, I asked him the same question as Pak Odang: ‘What was the past *agama* among Suku Asli before Buddhism came?’ He looked slightly surprised, and asserted, ‘Suku Asli have continuously believed in Buddhism from the past’, which was strongly worded answer. This response did not fit in with the information that I had obtained from other people. Therefore, I told him that I had heard that Maitreya Great Tao was established in the 1970s and its temple, *vihara*, was first built in 2001 in this area. He answered: ‘Yes, it’s true. However, we believed in Buddhism before it.’ According to him, in the 1970s when he travelled to Titi Akar, Rupert, he saw an idol of Buddha enshrined in the ‘*vihara*’ which had been established a long time ago; and, ‘the Suku Asli’ (the Akit) living in the village had worshipped the idol. Therefore, the Suku Asli had believed in Buddhism. At first, I felt curious because I had lived in Titi Akar and knew that the ‘*vihara*’ in Titi Akar had been established at the end of the 1990s. However, I then realised that he was talking about a *klenteng*, established by the ethnic Chinese at the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, in the *klenteng*, some idols of Buddha were enshrined together with many Chinese deities. So, I said: ‘I think it is a *klenteng* of Confucianism, not a *vihara* of Buddhism.’ In response, he said: ‘It’s the same. Whether it is *klenteng* or *vihara*, the Suku Asli have worshipped Buddha from our ancestors. So, we have been Buddhists.’ For him, Buddhism is an *agama* inherited from their ancestors.

This was a general tendency for the leaders of IKBBSA, in which they equated Buddhism and Confucianism. When I asked a similar question, Pak Ajui also asserted that Buddhism had been their ancestral *agama* and pointed out the existence of *klenteng*. However, their view is not common among ordinary Suku Asli. Although there is actually some ambiguity about the relationship between Confucianism and Buddhism, they distinguish *vihara* and *klenteng* as well as Confucianism and Buddhism. Also, many informants regard Buddhism as having been introduced to their society within the last several decades. Furthermore, even if

their ancestors had worshipped the icon of Buddha in *klenteng*, they were only Chinese or *peranakan* Chinese. ‘Real’ Suku Asli and most of *peranakan* Suku Asli have rarely engaged in religious practices in *klenteng*.

In spite of these facts, the leaders strongly insist that Suku Asli have followed Buddhism from their ancestors. The reason is related to the establishment of IKBBSA and their role of *batin*. First, their emphasis on historically continuous beliefs in Buddhism among the Suku Asli was an essential strategy to have the government recognise the position of the Suku Asli in state politics. Pak Kimdi, a regency assembly member and strong supporter of the activity of IKBBSA, told me that the ambiguity of *agama* gave a very bad impression to the government. Giving the example of the Sakai of inland Bengkalis regency, whose *agama* was ambiguous and changeable rather than the Suku Asli, he emphasised how the government had a bad impression on Sakai communities because of their flexible *agama* and that Suku Asli *agama* should be integrated and made stable in order to give the government a good impression on their communities. His opinion was shared by the leaders. As the headmen of the Suku Asli, the leaders had met the government authorities, who asked about the Suku Asli with some curiosity. In such conversations, the question of Suku Asli *agama* is inevitable, as *agama* is one of the most important criteria that distinguish indigenous minorities. At such opportunities, they have clearly described their *agama* by emphasising historical worship at *klenteng* as Buddhism.

Second, although IKBBSA is their ethnic organisation for claiming their position as Suku Asli, it also takes charge of the operation of religious bodies. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, IKBBSA was first established for the purpose of issuing marriage letters as substitutes for those issued by religious bodies. Just after its establishment, the leaders of IKBBSA started issuing the letter to anyone of Suku Asli origin who came to ask for it. However, the churches then claimed to the government that Christian Suku Asli should obtain the letter from them, and the government pressured the leaders to issue the letter only to Buddhists. As the basis of the activity of IKBBSA was related to *agama*, they needed to clearly show their *agama*.

Integration of *agama* and the integration of Suku Asli

Buddhism as the ancestral agama of the Suku Asli

As a result of government pressure, *agama* came up for discussion in the leaders' annual meeting. At a meeting of *batin* headman in Bengkalis regency around 2011, Pak Ajui suggested that the leaders should issue the letter only to Buddhists, not Christians. He insisted that as IKBBSA was an ethnic organisation of the Suku Asli, the leaders should issue the letter only to the people who practised marriage in the way of Suku Asli *adat*, that is, Buddhist Suku Asli. On the other hand, according to him, as Christians accepted the church's intervention, they should conduct marriages and funerals in a Christian fashion; this meant that they did not follow Suku Asli *adat*; thus, the leaders should not issue the letters to them. As there was no Christian leader in IKBBSA, all leaders agreed with his suggestion. This meant that Buddhism became a 'proper' *agama* for the Suku Asli in the view of IKBBSA, and indeed, this idea was shared by all the leaders.

It is remarkable that, in the meeting, Pak Ajui would have described Buddhism as their ancestral *agama* without associating *klenteng* and Buddhism. Equating worship at *klenteng* with Buddhism is only a reflection of the manner in which communication with the government officials takes place. Instead of acknowledging this, he described Buddhism as their ancestral *agama* by associating it with *adat*. This logic seems to be plausible only in so far that excludes Christians from membership in IKBBSA. This is because, as mentioned above, a section of the Suku Asli experienced the church's intervention in their *adat*. Once *agama* is associated with *adat*; it comes to be something concerned with ancestors, because *adat* in Suku Asli society is, first and foremost, concerned with ancestral rituals and descent. Therefore, for the leaders, *agama* should necessarily be an ancestral one.

They emphasised the importance of Buddhism as a religion under which ancestral rituals or *adat* could be maintained without undue interventions. Therefore, although Buddhism is regarded as a 'proper' *agama* in IKBBSA, the leaders were not interested in encouraging people to strengthen the faith of Buddhism as led by

Maitreya Great Tao. Rather, they strengthened their involvement in rituals that I described in Chapter 5, which can be categorised as *adat*.

Buddhist and Christian perspectives

The consolidation of their identification with Buddhism has brought about a somewhat negative view of Christians in Teluk Pambang. According to Pak Aju, following Christianity is a ‘mistake’ (*salah*), because Buddhism is their ancestral *agama*. Although ordinary Suku Asli’s views are more moderate, they also have rather negative opinions of Christians. Pak Kiat stated that the life of Christians was ‘difficult’ (*susah*). According to him, while people who held Christian marriage ceremonies should obtain the marriage letter from church, there were many couples who did not hold it in the church or who had already married when the church entered the community. As they did not have the marriage letter (see Chapter 4), they suffered much difficulty concerning their children’s education or other administrative procedures. In addition to such practical aspects, Buddhists generally saw Christians as people who ‘do not follow *adat*’, as mentioned above.

On the other hand, Pak Atong was a Christian living in Selat Baru, in which there is one of the largest Christian Suku Asli communities on Bengkalis Island. In this settlement, a Pentecostal church was established by a minister from Sulawesi in 1987, and there were about sixty households of Christians during my fieldwork.

Before 1987, Pak Atong identified himself as a Buddhist. However, just after the church was established, he converted to Christianity. The reason for his conversion was because he felt that ‘the government laughed (*pemerintah tawa*) at’ their nominal Buddhism. At first, the minister required them to hold the rituals such as funerals and weddings under his management. However, many people protested, and using *adat* was permitted to some extent. He ‘really’ believed in God, and went to church services once a week together with other villagers. However, several years ago, his wife, a *peranakan* Suku Asli from Teluk Pambang, fell sick and was called by *Kuat’im*, a Chinese deity, in her dream. This means that she had to become a Chinese medium, and to have an altar for the deity in the house. He consulted the

minister whether he could continue to be a Christian, but the minister gently encouraged him to become a Buddhist. Therefore, he returned to Buddhism.

According to him, he converted to Christianity because ‘the government laughed at’ their Buddhism. Although he did not clearly address this, Christian Suku Asli regard those who identify with Buddhism as not really having an *agama*. Probably, a gap between Buddhist and Christian Suku Asli which was derived from the differences over what counted as ‘real’ belief, emerged just after the church had entered their community. This gap deepened after IKBBSA decided that Buddhism was their *agama*. As mentioned above, *batin* did not issue the marriage letter to Christians anymore nor support any other official procedures. Some Buddhists said marriages with Christians were not appropriate because of the difference of *agama*. This split was also found in their everyday friendships; I did not see Buddhist Suku Asli in Teluk Pambang attend the ceremonies of funerals and marriages held in the Christian community.

This split is a result of the emergence of the orthodoxy of *agama* in Suku Asli society. Through the activities of IKBBSA, *agama* was politicised within their community. Although they avoided having their religious practices and beliefs problematised by the government policies, these have been changed in accord with the necessity of integrating their society as the Suku Asli – that is, an indigenous ethnic group.

The abstraction of everyday practices and the conceptualisation of indigeneity

The Suku Asli attitudes to and manipulation of *agama* are somewhat different from other indigenous communities. Although most Suku Asli identify their *agama* with newly introduced Buddhism, this is not a simple ‘conversion’ like the Forest Tobelo that I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Moreover, they do not directly claim their traditional rituals as *agama* or positively politicise them in relation to the government like the Ngaju Dayak and the Wana. The reason why they chose Buddhism introduced to them in recent years was because of the existence of

the *peranakan* Suku Asli in their society. Indonesian religious policy has been strongly connected with nationalism and social order, and it may often be oppressive to marginalised indigenous communities. The Suku Asli would have felt this political pressure especially strongly because, among them, there are a number of *peranakan* with a number of practices that stem from Chinese culture. They could not simply demonstrate their religious practices and beliefs as *agama* because such a claim could provoke government oppression. Instead, they chose a way that has allowed them to continue with their religious practices and beliefs under the name of Buddhism in a passive fashion. However, in the process of trying to claim their position as an indigenous ethnic group, they confronted the necessity of having to demonstrate their position in terms of *agama*. As a result, they actively identify themselves as Buddhists excluding Christian Suku Asli.

Clifford Geertz (1973) describes ‘internal-conversion’ among the Balinese before the 1960s, quoting Max Weber’s famous argument about ‘traditional’ and ‘rationalised’ religions. Describing the situation within which the Balinese strengthened religious concerns and systemised the doctrines of Hinduism, he demonstrates that, although their religion had been based on the correct practice of ritual, it was objectified and increasingly became based on the ‘correct belief’ through their experiences of reading religious publications and discussing the meaning of belief among themselves. In other words, their understanding of their religion shifted from a stress on ‘orthopraxy’, or the right kind of practice, to ‘orthodoxy’, or the right kind of belief. Suku Asli adoption of Buddhism cannot be seen as ‘internal-conversion’. They are not seeking a systematised doctrine or a way of ‘correct belief’ in Buddhism. Moreover, they try to maintain their traditional religious practices, *adat*, and avoid the religious body’s interventions. Rather, they identify themselves as Buddhists in relation to the state religious policies and neighbouring Muslims. Therefore, their adoption of Buddhism can be seen as performative in the same way as some elements of their *adat*, which I described in Chapter 5.

Instead of internally pursuing the systematised doctrine, Suku Asli objectification of their practices in terms of *agama* follows a particular kind of logic – that is, a logic that demonstrates their legitimate position in relationship to

government religious policies and Muslim perception of *agama*. For now, their focus is on manipulating the image of themselves held by others through identifying with Buddhism. This is directly connected to their claims regarding their position as an indigenous ethnic group distinguished from Islamic populations, and one that avoids serious conflicts with the government policies.

Nevertheless, I would like to suggest that Buddhism is becoming an important part of their identity, because Buddhism is something abstracted from their religious practices and beliefs according to their cultural logic. Their Buddhism is different not only from the ‘orthodox’ version of the religious Buddhist community but also from their actual religious practices. However, they summarise the maintenance of *adat*, belief and other religious practices, which includes diversity and individually different interpretations, with a ‘Buddhism’ label, and indeed most of them accepted it as their *agama*. Thus, even though it would be wrong to suggest that their practice has been rationalised or shifted to ‘orthodoxy’, Suku Asli conceptualisations of *agama* seem to indicate leaving behind certain elements of practices, – that is, the very beginning of a shift from ‘orthopraxy’ – a shift that has brought about a much more explicit emphasis on their tradition and identity as distinct signs of being Suku Asli.

The abstraction of their everyday practices, or shift from their ‘orthopraxy’, can be seen not only in their adoption of *agama*, but also in the other spheres of their identity that I have described in the previous chapters. They have abstracted their various, heterogeneous, ancestral backgrounds in order to start creating a common past. They have objectified the hinterland as ‘land for descendants’ and started treating the mangrove swamps as ‘ancestral land’ stressing their connection with particular spaces. They have strengthened the existence of the ‘Suku Asli’ through IKBBSA’s activities. They have started to integrate their diverse *adat* into the form of ‘art’. In these processes, their unconscious, small-unit, actual practices and associations, which can be summarised by the term ‘indigeny’ are objectified and abstracted, and more conscious, comprehensive and imagined concepts are constructed. It is important to keep in mind that these operations may well be the beginning of a change which will eventually take them from a universe of ‘orthopraxy’ to a universe of ‘orthodoxy’ – a beginning more than apparent in the

way in which their practices have started to be seen as an embodiment and manifestation of a distinct 'indigenous' and 'ethnic' identity. Their identity and categorisation that were characterised by relational 'non-Islamic alliance' are transforming into distinct one which includes substantiality, integration and criteria as Buddhists.

Furthermore, this change brings about a change of their position as tribespeople in terms of modernisation as well. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, one of the reasons why the Suku Asli were marginalised and discriminated as 'tribespeople' was because of their non-Islamic religious practices. Because they have not adopted Islam, they have been seen as 'backward' and 'primitive'. Therefore, when their *agama* is specified and recognised by Muslims, they can start to amend the image of their 'backwardness' and 'primitiveness' to a considerable extent. In other words, by specifying an integrated *agama*, they can accomplish the beginning of their transition to modernisation. The leaders of IKBBSA have tried to configure their position as an indigenous ethnic group and an '*adat* community' by adopting the government image; in this process, the specification and integration of a Suku Asli *agama* were essential for the leaders. In short, through their manifestation of indigeneity, the Suku Asli entered the realm of modernity. Although their Buddhism was not adequately recognised by dominant Muslims during my fieldwork, they are on their way to becoming what they ought to be – that is, an '*adat* community'.

Conclusion

The Suku Asli have manipulated their indigenous identity; more specifically, they have conceptualised ancestral land, established an ethnic organisation, transformed *adat* into performative culture, and integrated *agama*. These processes show that indigeneity has not emerged on the stable basis of ancestral inheritances, such as ancestral territory and traditional political organisation, or clearly bounded, homogenous and primordial identity. Rather, in and through the instability and problematisation of their identity, they have objectified and abstracted their historical practices and constructed their indigenous identity. The trigger of the instability and problematisation was government interventions which attempted to configure and stimulate their aspirations to becoming a ‘traditional’ community, which is represented by the idealised image of an ‘*adat* community’. While adopting this image as a perspective, the Suku Asli created their *adat* identity using their own cultural logic that is configured by a complex and diverse social situation and traditional but unconscious practices in everyday life. In other words, indigeneity has been created by instability and problematisation of their identity that was introduced by state politics.

As I mentioned in the introduction, Li (2000: 151) suggests: ‘a group’s self-identification as tribal or indigenous is not natural or inevitable’. This view seems to be the case in the sense that rural communities may have some room for choice of their identities. This was especially so just after 1998 when the Indonesian polity changed and national or international activists began the ‘indigenous movement’ in the scheme of struggling with the state. However, in present-day Indonesian politics, the room for choice has become narrower and a group’s self-identification as indigenous has become more inevitable especially among tribespeople. This is because the government policies with a ‘governmental’ ethos tried to embody ‘*adat* communities’ in rural areas. Under such policies, more and more tribespeople have ‘inevitably’ confronted the instability and problematisation of their identities, and this would result in that they configure and conceptualise an *adat* identity or indigenous one like the Suku Asli. This would be applied not only to tribespeople in Indonesia but also to those elsewhere in the world. When the government recognises

the position of 'indigenous peoples' and designates their criteria, tribespeople have to configure and conceptualise their indigenous identity by objectifying and abstracting their historical practices, somewhat inevitably.

As Suku Asli indigeneity has only emerged over the past ten years, the social changes it reflects and causes are parts of a dynamic process. In this conclusion, I would like to describe some of the possibilities generated by the emergence of their indigeneity.

At present, Suku Asli's objectification and embodiment of indigeneity does not involve clearly organised political actions such as demonstrations; they do not actively claim their rights to more territory or government support based on their indigenous position, nor do they exclude outsiders by demonstrating their indigeneity in an organised fashion. However, since the fall of Suharto, it seems to be common that tribespeople begin to struggle with the government and outsiders by manifesting their indigeneity in organised political actions. For example, the Sakai living in the same regency often visit government officials to claim their land rights as the basis of their future prosperity, and these negotiations may take the form of organised political demonstration in front of the government offices (Porath 2002: 790). The Orang Rimba in Jambi have also engaged in public relations activities with the strong support of a number of NGOs and media, and obtained the right to live in a national park (Li 2000). Therefore, it is an essential question whether Suku Asli indigeneity will be transformed into such organised political actions.

The first scenario is that they will reinforce their indigeneity and begin to struggle with the government to protect their rights. As Brubaker (2004) points out, ethnicity attracts the loyalty and aspirations of people and mobilises them to reinforce the 'groupness' at 'events' during which people are confronted with the necessity to show their ethnicity. In the same way, indigenous identity can be transformed into organised political demands if the people confront matters they have to struggle against. In some respects, this seems to be the case with the Suku Asli. The activity of IKBBSA is still developing briskly, and involving more and more people in the various fields of Suku Asli life. In terms of *adat* and *agama*, in particular, their indigeneity would be reinforced by struggle. In the context of IKBBSA, the social value of practising ancestral worship and identifying themselves

as Buddhists becomes increasingly important. In addition, there are some signs of immediate problems. In the Rawa region and Padang Island, a government-sponsored corporation has begun drilling for oil and enclosing the potential oilfields by constructing fences and ditches. This prevents Suku Asli from hunting wild boar in the forest, which is an important source of livelihood in these regions. In Rawa region, an environmental NGO in Pekanbaru has begun to support the Suku Asli through claiming their traditional land rights and organising them. If this movement spreads to other communities, the Suku Asli may begin to take organised political action.

The second scenario is that although they have started constructing their indigeneity, they will not really be concerned with organised political action based on this indigeneity. This seems to be much more probable than the first scenario. As I have emphasised throughout the previous chapters, their manifestation of indigeneity emerged in a collaboration between them and the government policies rather than through serious and emergent conflicts and competitions over land and other urgent problems. Their aspiration was to have the government recognise their identity as Suku Asli and revise their uncertain and marginalised position within the state. This aspiration was achieved through the establishment of IKBBSA. Therefore, while IKBBSA continues their activities to elaborate and integrate ancestral worship and *agama* into internal cohesion, it may not transform into collective political action in relation to the state.

Their marginalised position in state politics is changing in accord with the shift in the government's local policies. In the political movement of 'decentralisation', the Bengkalis regency has been dividing the existing administrative villages in recent few years. According to one official, this policy is to correct a tendency whereby government subsidies for infrastructures were used only for the central part of each village and, instead, distribute them to the peripheral areas more equally. Under this policy, at the end of 2012, Teluk Pambang was divided into three independent administrative villages, and the western part of the village where many Suku Asli live became the new village of Suka Maju. As the majority of this new village is Suku Asli, it is highly probable that a Suku Asli will take the role of the administrative headman in the 2015 election. This will bring them more access to

state power, and their aspirations to further development projects may be achieved through this formal channel. This can be an alternative to the political demonstration of indigeneity, which would necessitate 'standing up' to the state in a much more aggressive fashion.

However, this does not mean that their indigenous identity will be completely integrated into the Indonesian national identity. As minor, non-Islamic, tribespeople in this region, they can stabilise their position in the state politics and accomplish their modernisation only by claiming their indigeneity in accordance with the government rules. Therefore, the 'cultural' activities of IKBBSA must continue, and their identity as Suku Asli will have to be produced and established further in this ambivalent situation.

Glossary

<i>adat</i>	tradition or custom; customary law; norms; ancestral ritual religion, in particular, universal religion legitimated by the state
<i>agama</i>	
<i>bakau</i>	a species of mangrove trees, the Rhizophoraceae family
<i>batin</i>	indigenous title of headman, mainly, for <i>orang asli</i> groups
<i>bomo cina</i>	spirit medium possessed by Chinese deities, similar to <i>kiton</i> in Chinese
<i>empat suku</i>	literally ‘four clans’, a class/set of people with Minangkabau origins in the Siak kingdom.
<i>datuk kong</i>	shrine for local spirits related to Chinese folk religion; synonym of <i>keramat</i> in Suku Asli communities
<i>daulat</i>	charismatic power of the ruler; sovereignty
<i>dukun</i>	shaman employing spirits in Suku Asli culture, equal with <i>bomo Asli</i>
<i>hamba raja</i>	literally ‘king’s subjects’; a class of Malay peasants in the Siak kingdom.
<i>ilmu</i>	magic, knowledge
<i>imlek</i>	New Year’s feast based on the Chinese lunar calendar
<i>kelenteng</i>	Confucian temple
<i>masyarakat adat</i>	literally ‘adat community’
<i>masyarakat terasing</i>	literally ‘isolated community’, a label given to tribespeople who were the main target of the government development programme
<i>kacu</i>	mixed; not pure
<i>keramat</i>	sacred place in Malay and Suku Asli culture; synonym of <i>datuk kong</i> in Suku Asli communities
<i>kertas mas</i>	mock money to be burnt in <i>peranakan</i> /Chinese rituals
<i>orang</i>	People
<i>orang asli</i>	literally ‘real/genuine people’; indigenous people; tribespeople
<i>panglong system</i>	a system to delegate timber harvesting to Chinese merchants
<i>peranakan</i>	mix-blood Chinese; acculturated Chinese; one having Chinese patrilineal descent
<i>rakyat banang</i>	a sub-class/set of <i>rakyat raja</i> in the Siak kingdom for non-Muslims and the forest or coastal dwellers, i.e. the Sakai, Akit, Utan and Rawa
<i>rakyat raja</i>	literally ‘king’s folk’, a lower class in the Siak kingdom

	composed of <i>rakyat tantera/banang</i>
<i>rakyat tantera</i>	a sub-class/set of <i>rakyat raja</i> in the Siak kingdom for Muslims in peripheral regions including the Orang Laut, Petalangan and some Malays
<i>reformasi</i>	reformation, the slogan of Indonesian political movement in post-Suharto era
<i>sirih</i> box	a box containing <i>sirih</i> (betel leaves), tobacco, areca nuts and other luxuries used at Malay and Suku Asli rituals
<i>suku</i>	clan in Minangkabau; tribes in modern Indonesian; regional group based on fictive kinship in rural area of Riau; administrative unit based on region in the Siak kingdom
<i>suku-suku terasing</i>	literally ‘isolated tribes’, a label of tribespeople in the government development programme replaced by <i>masyarakat terasing</i> in the 1970s
<i>tepekong</i>	(Chinese) altar put in each house of the <i>peranakan</i> Suku Asli and Chinese
<i>totok</i>	China-born ethnic Chinese; ‘new comer’; Chinese who are maintaining their Chinese culture and identity
<i>touke</i>	(Chinese) middleman; traders
<i>tujuh likur</i>	New Year’s feast held based on the Islamic calendar
<i>vihara</i>	Buddhist temple

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